A case study of a child presenting reading/writing and behavioral difficulties

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A CASE STUDY OF A CHILD PRESENTING READING/WRITING AND
BEHAVIORAL DIFFICULTIES

An Abstract of a Thesis
Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Specialist in Education

John Daniel Warrington
University of Northern Iowa
May 2004
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this case study/case history was to explore one individual thoroughly in order to develop a more specific appreciation and understanding of what has occurred throughout that person's life. This deeper understanding of Ivan's life history is likely to enable the researcher to identify both helpful interventions and structures that are currently in place for him and those that should be built upon or re-designed within the current school and/or home settings.

Ivan has experienced significant struggles in both academic and behavioral performance for many years now. He is nearing the end of his formalized educational experience as he is now in the 11th grade. If Ivan does not receive additional assistance in these areas in the upcoming academic school year, he can expect to have additional interrelated problems well into his adult life.

The researcher conducted a review of student records, interviews with various individuals who are close to Ivan in his life, classroom observations, and investigations of permanent products that Ivan has produced in the classroom. The researcher's data supported much of what had been said about Ivan in earlier reports, yet, it also uncovered some possibilities that may yet to have been fully explored. The researcher is optimistic that much can be done for Ivan in the next upcoming school year and believes that this investigation may serve as a strong reference point for others who are investigating children who have struggled with many of the same issues.
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This Study by: John Daniel Warrington

Entitled: A case study of a child presenting reading/writing and behavioral difficulties

Has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the

Degree of Specialist in Education

Date  Dr. Donald Schmits, Chair, Thesis Committee

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Date  Dr. Barry Wilson, Thesis Committee Member

Date  Dr. John W. Somervill, Dean, Graduate College
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Ivan (the pseudonym being utilized for the primary participant in this study) is generally a soft-spoken young man who appears to be well liked by the students and school personnel at his current school setting. He has had a long history of school and community difficulties primarily in the areas of reading/writing achievement and behavior problems. Ivan has lived in a variety of home settings, which has served as a primary variable in causing him to move frequently from school to school over the years. This abundance of instability in his life may be one variable out of many other factors that has led to his longstanding struggles in school and the greater society as a whole. Therefore, one must wonder what this individual has experienced throughout the course of his life if one can hope to help Ivan to put the pieces of his life's puzzle back together and right his ship for the future. Understanding Ivan may lead to insight on how to understand other, similar children.

The administrative secretary of the separate school facility in which Ivan currently attends, Mrs. Nash, has been working at this setting for many years now and has known Ivan outside of the school setting to some degree since he was a baby. Mrs. Nash is one of the school personnel members who must know all of the students in the school, as well as the personalities and behaviors that each one of them exhibits, in order to carry out the basic duties of her job. In regard to Ivan, she believes that he has had a lot of growth in the last few years, that he is much less explosive now, that he is more willing to share with others, that Ivan's family life has become a little bit more stable, that he is very polite with
all adults, that he has become more responsible as an individual, and that he is making better choices for himself. However, she also reported that Ivan is a student who usually comes to school looking very tired on a daily basis and he does not show much affect as he enters the school building each day; therefore, it is difficult to read what mood he might be in at any given time. Lastly, Mrs. Nash reminded the researcher that Ivan was one of six students who were nominated as student of the year candidates in an all-staff meeting that was held earlier in the year. As a result of the interview with Mrs. Nash and other participants (who will all be identified by their assigned pseudonyms in this research study), it has become evident to the researcher that various members of the school personnel have recognized his growth and areas of improvement over the years.

**Purpose and Importance of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate one individual intensively in order to develop a more thorough understanding of what has occurred throughout that person’s life. More specifically, the researcher intends to describe and analyze a single student and his academic and behavioral competencies across multiple contexts and years. This process is likely to enable the researcher to identify both helpful interventions and structures that are currently in place and those that can be built upon or re-designed within the current school and/or home setting(s). This process may also disclose less effective educational and lifestyle practices that have been in place at times and that may have had a negative influence upon the overall development of the primary research participant.
**Case Study Format**

This research study will be carried out by utilizing a case study/case history format. Case study research is commonly conducted by utilizing participant observations, interviews, and record analyses in order to assess the competencies, skills, and/or deficits of the primary subject(s) of research (Berg, 2001; Merriam, 2001; Patton, 2002; Yin, 1994). Case studies have been utilized frequently in the domain area of education for approximately 30 years (Merriam, 2001). A relatively recent upsurge in the use of the case study design within the field of education may be due in large part to the fact that case studies typically aim to focus upon overall contexts rather than specific isolated variables of one setting, on processes rather than outcomes, and on new discoveries rather than confirmations of existing theories. This broadened viewpoint of insight gathering lends itself more easily to creating positive changes in practices, polices, and future areas of study (Merriam, 2001).

Most forms of case study research are designed to study a behavior, phenomenon, or other such entity with little to no disruption of the natural settings that the object or objects of interest exist within. Case study researchers also strive to gain an understanding of occurrences, experiences, events, and behaviors from the perspectives of those individuals who created or carried out those occurrences, experiences, events, or behaviors (Merriam, 2001). Because of the fact that the phenomena of interest typically come from within the participants themselves, researchers must interact directly with the individuals of interest in order to clarify both why and how certain behaviors occur. Additionally, case study research does provide a large degree of ecological validity, in
that, research findings from case studies typically represent true-to-life experiences that are not artificially constructed by research laboratories or other constraints that are more commonly found in pre-established research studies (Bisesi & Raphael, 1995).

Therefore, the researcher intends to make an effort to speak with as many individuals as possible who have had a significant influence upon the life of the primary research participant. This may allow the researcher to understand events, experiences, and/or behaviors from a variety of perspectives; hence, building a more solid picture of the life history of the primary participant. Furthermore, the researcher intends to interact with all research participants with as little disruption of the natural environment as feasible. This tactic should allow all participants to carry on as they naturally would have without the disruption of an outside or atypical influence; thus, allowing the researcher to collect data that is as reliable as possible.

Values of the Researcher

The researcher is an individual who is currently a graduate student who has strong feelings about the importance of education. The researcher grew up in a white middle-class nuclear family in which both of his parents were college graduates. Moreover, the researcher’s mother went on to graduate school where she received her master’s degree in reading education and served as a classroom teacher in the primary grades for over 20 years. Both parents, as well as many of the extended family members who had regular contact with the researcher as a child, held education as a very high priority for themselves and for members of their own families.
Organization

The case study/case history of Ivan will be separated into a total of four different chapters as to present all relevant information in a natural progression that the reader should be able to best understand. The thesis starts with an introduction, purpose, explanation of style, and the global perspective of the researcher in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 presents the case and the supporting data from multiple sources, which allows for a more complete understanding of the history of the primary research participant from an assortment of diverse perspectives. Chapter 3 provides information on the interventions and plans to remediate the primary research participant’s negative and/or deficient behaviors. Finally, Chapter 4 discusses the conclusions of the case, potential explanations for the primary research participant’s negative and/or deficient behaviors, possible directions for future programming for the primary research participant, and implications for future research on individuals who have had many of the same experiences that the primary research participant has had throughout his life.
CHAPTER 2
DEMOGRAPHICS AND ASSESSMENT ISSUES

Demographics

Ivan is a 17-year-old Caucasian male who attends school in a small midwestern town. Ivan’s current school placement is within a district that serves approximately 2,000 children from kindergarten through the 12th grade. Ivan is currently in the 11th grade.

Ecology/Environment

Ivan has attended a variety of school settings throughout his educational career. He attended a preschool with special education supports for a period of 2 years within the county of his mother’s residence. Ivan then started his kindergarten year in the local regular education building with some of the same special education supports, but was sent out of the local school district during the second semester to a separate special school setting that dealt specifically with children who required additional supports for behavioral difficulties. Ivan remained at the separate special school setting through the end of his fourth-grade year. He was then placed back into the regular education setting with special education supports for his fifth- and sixth-grade years. However, he did spend a period of time in a youth shelter setting during the spring semester of his sixth-grade year and attended classes at the shelter setting during this time. As Ivan moved on to the junior high school level, he continued to attend school within the regular education setting with special education supports through the seventh grade and during the first half of his eighth-grade year. Ivan once again experienced brief placements into the youth shelter during portions his seventh- and eighth-grade school years and attended school at the
shelter facility during his stay. He was then placed into a different separate school facility for children with behavioral disorders for the second half of his eighth-grade year. For Ivan's ninth-grade year, he was once again placed back into the regular education setting with special education supports, but was sent back to the separate facility again during the second semester of his ninth-grade year and has remained in this same setting ever since.

Ivan's education is currently delivered to him within both a self-contained classroom unit in a separate facility and an open unit, both of which he attends for a portion of each school day. In Ivan's self-contained school placement, where he spends a majority of his school day, there were a total of 61 students as of the start of the spring semester of 2003. Of this total, 53 were male (87%) while 8 were female (13%). Minorities made up 15% of the total school population. More specifically, 52 of the total number of students were Caucasian (85%), 8 of the students were African-American (13%), and 1 student was Asian-American (2%). All of the students who attended this school were entitled to special education services.

Classrooms in the separate school facility were divided by student performance level and by best-of-fit placement decisions, rather than simply placing students based upon their assigned grade levels. For instance, in Ivan's classroom, of the five total students in the classroom, one was in the 9th grade, three were in the 10th grade, and one was in the 11th grade. In Ivan's classroom, there is one lead teacher and one para-educator who both work to serve the needs of all of the children in the classroom. The classroom teacher is a Caucasian male and the para-educator is a Caucasian female. All of the students in the classroom are Caucasian males.
In addition to the classroom teachers and para-educators, Ivan’s primary school setting has a variety of support staff members and ancillary personnel who choose to assist students either individually or in groups, both inside and outside of the primary classroom setting. Specifically, the school is staffed with a school psychologist, a special education consultant, a social worker, an interventionist, two behavioral management staff members, a special education nurse, a school-wide para-educator, a school-wide physical education teacher, an Experience Based Career Education (EBCE) coordinator, an administrative secretary and a school principal. Unfortunately, the school does not currently have sufficient means to employ a reading specialist or any other specialized academic experts who can specifically work with students on their academic deficit skill areas when the regular classroom teachers or other existing school personnel are unable to do so.

The separate school facility that Ivan receives a majority of his educational services in has a partnership with the local schools that allows students to be integrated into the regular education setting. The researcher chose to conduct an interview with Mr. Thompson, the superintendent of schools for the district that Ivan currently attends, in order to obtain more information regarding the integration program that the district helps to support. Ivan is currently enrolled in an art class at the local high school in which he is reintegrated into the general education setting for one period each day. Mr. Thompson has been working in this district for a total of 6 years now. He indicated that although there was a partnership between the separate school facility and the local regular education schools prior to his arrival, there were some limitations to this partnership and he has been working throughout his tenure to make a variety of improvements to the
entire system. Specific limitations included course availability, the number of students that could be integrated at one time, and limitations on the severity of the behavioral disorder that a child could possess if he/she were to be allowed into an integrated classroom setting.

Mr. Thompson believes that there is great value in integrating students into the general education environment when students are ready for this experience. He pointed out that many students benefit from the exposure to the classroom management methods, rules, structure, and pace of the general education environment before being discharged to their home school districts or graduating from the separate school facility and moving on into the real world. He also explained that integration does not work well for every child and that good timing may also be an issue for other students. Mr. Thompson is proud of the fact that students have been integrated to a much larger degree over the past 6 years and that many of the limitations have been eliminated as the partnership has strengthened. Although Mr. Thompson had many positive things to say about the current status of the integration program within his district, he did feel that there could be further improvements to the amount of communication and information sharing between the separate facility and the general education environments. In his opinion, improvements of this general nature could only make a good thing better for all people involved.

Health/Developmental History

The special education nurses have obtained health history information over the years through interviews with Ivan and his mother and by directly conducting health screenings with Ivan from time to time. It was reported that during her pregnancy with
Ivan, Ms. Offerman (Ivan's mother) did not drink alcohol. However, she did report smoking two to three packs of cigarettes per day near the time of Ivan's birth. She was also said to have had pneumonia at some time during her pregnancy with Ivan. Though Ivan's birth was overdue by 22 days, there were no significant difficulties reported with the birth and there was nothing different or unusual about the labor or delivery according to Ms. Offerman. Within the first year of life, Ivan was described as a baby who didn't have any problems with eating, gaining weight, or sleeping. Ms. Offerman feels that he reached his primary developmental milestones within the normal range of time. She also stated in documents that other children in the family have special needs as well, and that the family has had a multi-generational history of individuals with special needs. For instance, during the researcher's recent interview, it was reported by Ms. Offerman that in addition to Ivan's similar diagnosis, she too has been previously diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

While in the eighth grade, Ivan was seen by an appropriate medical doctor when he was admitted to the hospital as a result of a behavioral incident at school that required intervention from local law enforcement officers. The doctor reported that Ivan has had a long history of behavioral problems and that he has been tried on different medications over the years. The doctor also reported that Ivan has had a history of drinking alcohol and has been in trouble with the law in the past. Furthermore, the medical doctor reported that Ivan was feeling depressed, blah, hopeless, suicidal, and said that his life stinks and that there was nothing to live for at that time in his life. A concurrent physical examination indicated that Ivan was an essentially healthy individual. As a result of the
analysis, the doctor diagnosed Ivan with depressive disorder, not otherwise specified and made mention of a history of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and oppositional defiant disorder.

Ivan is currently taking three different medications, including Wellbutrin, in order to balance his mood and to help him sleep better at night. Though it was reported in his file that Ivan had been taking Zoloft, Prozac, and Risperidone near the start of the current school year, it must be noted that the specific names and purposes of the other two medications that he is currently taking were not located or identified in Ivan's files or through an interview with his mother. Medications that he has taken in the past include Thioridazine and Prozac (ninth grade), Zoloft (eighth grade), Ritalin, (seventh grade), and Hydroxyzine (second grade through eighth grade). Although it is quite possible that Ivan has been tried on other medications over the years that the researcher was unable to identify, there was a limited amount of information in Ivan's cumulative school records in this regard and any information on medications that Ivan took solely at his home residence may have never been shared with the schools.

At the start of Ivan's current 11th-grade school year, he was seen by an appropriate physician at a local clinic and was reported to have depressive disorder with psychotic features. In the researcher's recent interview with Ms. Offerman, it was also reported that Ivan has been attending Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings for at least 1 year because of his past problems with alcohol use/abuse and attends these meetings anywhere from three to five times per week. Other than these reports, Ivan appears to be a fairly healthy young man based upon the researcher's interactions with him to this point.
Family Background

Ms. Offerman and Ivan's father became separated during the time that she was pregnant with Ivan. Ivan was removed from his home when he was only 2-years-old and was placed into foster care because his mother was unable to care for him at the time. He remained in foster care, living with three different families, until he was eventually placed back with his biological mother at the age of 6. Ivan was removed from his mother's home once again from the ages of 13 to 14 due to his problems with the law and other such behavioral difficulties that his mother was unable to sufficiently supervise or control. During this time he was assigned to three different foster homes; one of which was with a family that he had been previously placed with as a youngster. Ivan returned to his biological mother's residence in the middle of his ninth-grade school year and has lived there ever since.

Ivan is the 4th of five boys, all of whom have been reported to have behavioral problems. There has been a great deal of aggression within the home environment in the past, and all five of the boys have been reported to have received special education services. Furthermore, multiple additional stressors have accumulated for the family to the point that Ivan's mother has indicated that she feels nearly overwhelmed at times. Ms. Offerman has been appreciative of all outside supports that have been provided to the family over the years. For instance, Ivan has been receiving direct and indirect support for his needs and the needs of his family since the time of his birth. The Department of Human Services (DHS) has been reported to have provided various services and forms of assistance over the years including counseling, parent training, and direct financial support.
for the family. Though the level and amount of service provided has varied over the years, Ivan and his family continue to receive such supports to this date.

**General Assessment Issues**

**Reliability and Validity Considerations for Assessment Procedures**

Evaluators must be cognizant of the multiple factors that may have an influence upon the reliability and validity of the assessment procedures that they choose to utilize. Resulting biases may sway or negatively influence the data that is reported on if one is careless to protect against these sometimes subtle factors.

The reliability of a review of records can be influenced by the subjectivity of the reviewer as well as by the consistency among the data collection sources. On the other hand, the validity of a review of records can be affected by missing information, the pertinence of the content in the review, whether or not one is looking for the right information, and whether or not the products of review are representative of the individual's overall behavior (Witt, Elliott, Daly III, Gresham, & Kramer, 1998).

The reliability of the information from an interview can also be induced based upon the characteristics of the interviewee (i.e., racial/cultural differences between the interviewer and interviewee), levels of consistency within and between the interviews, and the recency of the occurrences of behaviors that are talked about in the interview. Moreover, interview reliability can be changed based upon any time constraints set for the interview itself as well as by a variety of uncontrollable extraneous variables (i.e., interviewee having a bad day). Similarly, the validity of interview data can be altered based upon the level of rapport that is built between the interviewer and interviewee, when
the interviewer does not ask the right questions, and when the interviewer uses any leading questions during the interview. Lastly, the validity of the data from interviews can be influenced by not interviewing the right people or by the accuracy, or lack thereof, in specifically remembering information on the part of the interviewee (Witt et al., 1998).

In relation to the reliability of behavioral observations, one must consider the variety inherent in observational samples (i.e., number of observations, variety in locations, variety in activities, etc.), social desirability factors (if the target individual changes their behaviors as a result of the evaluator's presence), and the consistency between raters/evaluators. Further, the reliability in observational data collection can be skewed based upon biases held by the raters/evaluators and the degree to which the behaviors of concern have been adequately defined ahead of time so that they can be identified and recorded with consistency. Correspondingly, the validity of observational data may be influenced by whether or not the observation is conducted in an appropriate environment, the accuracy in measurement of behaviors, the level of obtrusiveness on the part of the evaluator, situational factors (i.e., time of day, specific environment, etc.), and by preconceived expectations held by the evaluator (Witt et al., 1998).

**Specific Assessments**

**Cumulative School File Review**

- **Pre-school.** Ivan was first evaluated for his need for special education services as he was referred to Child Find during a preschool evaluation when he was 3 years old. At this time, concerns were raised as a result of his negative social behaviors and struggles in the areas of speech and language. As a result of the evaluation, Ivan was diagnosed with
both speech and language problems and a behavior disability and was placed into a special preschool classroom environment that would help to meet his individual needs. Within the special preschool classroom, he continued to have problems interacting with his peers, responding to adult directions, and exhibiting explosive temper outbursts. More specifically, Ivan’s needs in preschool included continuing to develop his pre-academic concern areas, remediating his fine-motor and visual-motor skills, improving his articulation and language proficiencies, strengthening his play and work behaviors with other same-aged peers, and improving his level of compliance to adult authority. During his preschool years, Ivan was reported to have been assessed in the area of general intellectual functioning. A Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale – Fourth edition (Thorndike, Hagen, & Sattler, 1986), given by the school psychologist in Ivan’s preschool, revealed Ivan to have an overall intelligence quotient of around 94 (in the normal or average range). Ivan attended preschool for a total of 2 years before moving on to kindergarten.

Kindergarten. Due to his explosive temper tantrums and early academic difficulties, Ivan was moved in the second semester of his kindergarten year to a separate school facility that specifically served children with behavior disabilities. At this time, Ivan was served in special education with a primary disability diagnosis of a behavior disorder. Ivan continued to attend this separate school facility through the end of the fourth grade. During Ivan’s attendance at this school facility, it was reported that he would exhibit violent outbursts in which he would utilize physical aggression when he did not get his way. The school personnel decided to utilize positive reinforcers to increase the frequency
of Ivan’s positive behaviors and utilize the time-out room when Ivan’s behaviors became unsafe for himself, the other children, and the staff members in the classroom.

During Ivan’s kindergarten years, a Burks Behavior Rating Scale (Burks, 1977) assessment showed some significant problems for him in the areas of excessive self-blame, poor intellectuality, excessive suffering, poor anger control, and excessive resistance. Ivan showed the greatest level of significance on this scale related to problems in the areas of poor academics, poor attention, and poor impulse control. Additionally, information gathered from the Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach, 1991) assessment during these initial years of formalized education revealed Ivan to be in the significantly high range for aggressiveness, explosiveness, attacking behaviors, withdrawal, anxiety, and depression. The first mention of Ivan’s struggles with literacy was made at this time as his teacher mentioned that he did not know his letters; especially those letters that were used to write out his own name. Unfortunately, it was reported at this time that the teacher was unable to gain enough compliance from Ivan in order to teach him these skills.

First grade. In the first grade, Ivan was administered the Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery – Part 2: Test of Achievement Revised (Woodcock & Johnson, 1989). The special education consultant chose to report Ivan’s results based upon standard scores for all of the subtests that were administered. In the area of letter/word identification Ivan obtained a 61 (very low), in passage comprehension he obtained an 84 (low average), in calculation a 77 (low), in applied problems a 101 (average), in dictation a 55 (very low), in science a 108 (average), in social studies a 108 (average), and in humanities a standard score of 107 (average).
Fourth grade. While in the fourth grade, Ivan was administered the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children – Third Edition (Wechsler, 1991). Ivan obtained a verbal scale intelligence quotient score of 76 (in the borderline range), a performance scale intelligence quotient score of 93 (in the average range), and a full-scale intelligence quotient score of 76 (in the borderline range). The school psychologist summarized this assessment by explaining that when compared to other students in his age group, Ivan’s overall level of cognitive functioning appears to be in the low-average to borderline range. Ivan was also administered the Woodcock Johnson Psychoeducational Battery (Woodcock & Johnson, 1989) during his fourth-grade year. The special education consultant who administered the battery chose to report only the age equivalency (ae) and grade equivalency (ge) scores for the subtests that were given. In the area of reading Ivan’s scores fell at a 6-4 (ae) and a 1.1 (ge), in mathematics his scores fell at a 7-4 (ae) and a 2.2 (ge), in written language his scores fell at a 5-6 (ae) and a 1.0 (ge), and in knowledge his scores fell at an 8-7 (ae) and a 3.3 (ge). The special education consultant summarized this assessment by mentioning that subtests of the Woodcock Johnson Psychoeducational Battery requiring Ivan to read or write were more depressed than subtests where he only needed to listen and give verbal responses.

Due to his overall difficulties during his fourth-grade school year, Ivan was provided with a variety of accommodations, modifications, and adaptations to his educational programming. Some of these included having all texts and printed materials read to him, having someone help to record his written answers, one-to-one teaching of functional reading, slower paced instruction, activity-based/manipulative approaches to
teaching concepts, and a highly structured learning environment to teach appropriate behavior skills. At the time of his reevaluation near the end of his fourth-grade year, Ivan’s primary disability diagnosis was switched to that of a learning disability with a secondary diagnosis of a behavior disorder. The IEP team had decided that because of his improvements in the area of overall behavior within the separate school setting, Ivan would be better served in a setting that would put more emphasis on his academic concerns at that time.

**Fifth and sixth grades.** During his fifth- and sixth-grade years, Ivan was then moved back to a regular education school building, but still received special education services in self-contained special classrooms with little integration. In the sixth grade, it was indicated that Ivan needed all content reading to be read aloud to him or to be explained to him through one-on-one instruction because his reading ability was thought to be at the first-grade level. Additional classroom accommodations/modifications at the time also included activity- and manipulative-based teaching with a slower paced approach, books on tape, and provision of a highly structured environment to meet his behavioral needs.

**Junior high.** When he moved on to the junior high school level, Ivan remained in a self-contained special classroom setting with little integration. Ivan was primarily served in special classes for all of his core subject areas and was integrated into the regular education environment for exploratory class periods such as lunch, recess, music, and physical education.
In the seventh grade, Ivan was administered a variety of assessments throughout the year. On an unnamed individualized, standardized, norm-referenced academic screening test, Ivan was reported to have obtained a grade equivalency score of 1.9 in the area of reading. Additionally, curriculum-based reading probes indicated that Ivan's independent reading skills were at a beginning second-grade level and his instructional level was found to be at an upper second-grade to a beginning third-grade level at the time. As a result of the reading assessments, it was suggested that Ivan be taught remedial reading strategies by utilizing a focus upon phonics instruction in order to increase his overall reading fluency. More specifically, it was suggested that the Kansas University DISSECT word identification strategy might be a good curricular tool to use with Ivan. Interrelated to his reading deficits, Ivan was found to have written language skills at the second-grade level. In reference to remedial strategies, it was suggested that ways of compensating for his written language deficits be identified. The strategies that were explored included the use of a scribe and one-on-one peer editing. Lastly, Ivan's math skills were found to be an area of relative strength for him during his seventh-grade year.

In regard to additional assessments during Ivan's seventh-grade school year, he was also assessed with the Woodcock-McGrew-Werder Mini-Battery of Achievement (Woodcock, McGrew, & Werder, 1994). It was reported that Ivan earned a standard score of 59 in the area of basic skills (very low range), a standard score of 50 in the area of reading (very low range), a standard score of 59 in the area of writing (very low range), a standard score of 76 in the area of mathematics (low range), and a standard score of 101 in the area of factual knowledge (average range).
While in the eighth grade, the IEP team specifically discussed their concerns in connection to Ivan’s severe deficits in reading and writing. Moreover, and possibly of a higher degree of importance at the time, it eventually became necessary to develop a behavior intervention plan for Ivan because of his poor behavioral conduct. The plan included the utilization of a behavior checklist, verbal and visual cues for behaviors, direct teaching of social skills, and a systematic process for referring him to a behavior interventionist during times of noncompliance. Although this plan appeared to be effective for some time, Ivan had a major behavioral incident in February of his eighth-grade year that required intervention from members of the local law enforcement agency. The incident included severe noncompliant behaviors and threats to commit suicide, which caused school personnel to have serious concerns about their ability to assure and maintain his safety, as well as the safety of others, in the current educational setting. After a brief return to the school setting following an in-patient mental health evaluation, the IEP team spoke about Ivan’s demonstration of a conduct disorder that was pervasive over time and across settings and made the suggestion for Ivan to be served in a separate school facility that could better meet his behavioral and emotional needs. During his entire eighth-grade year, Ivan continued to receive counseling services and continued to be tracked by a Juvenile Court Services (JCS) officer due to previous problems with the law.

During the portion of Ivan’s ninth-grade school year in which he attended school at a general education setting on a trial basis, he had a total of four office interventions for major behavioral incidents. These incidents included behaviors such as not accepting correction or criticism from adults, not taking responsibility for his own actions, blurting
out in class, disrupting the classroom environment, and outright defiance of authority. Additionally, Ivan took part in some even more alarming behaviors that truly concerned members of the school staff when he drew pictures of guns and knives and made threats to hurt himself.

High school. Ivan’s most recent three-year reevaluation and corresponding annual IEP review were conducted in late May of 2002. His current IEP states that Ivan’s primary disability is a behavior disorder and that his secondary disability is a learning disability. Although the ordinal rankings of these two disability categories have been changed from time to time as Ivan has moved along through the educational system, his current disability status is partially a result of his placement rather than the full emphasis being placed upon order of severity or need. Ivan’s most recent IEP reevaluation also made mention of his academic and behavioral needs. One of those main areas of need includes the issue of transition planning. In addition to Ivan’s reintegration into the local high school, the other aspects of his transition plan were to be incorporated into his everyday social skills/life skills class, careers class, and EBCE experiences.

Ivan’s IEP’s have repeatedly mentioned over the years that the general education environment does not have the educational personnel or time to effectively meet his educational and behavioral needs. Moreover, the IEP’s have stated that if placed in the general education environment, Ivan would be likely to become frustrated due to the lack of academic and behavioral support, and as a result, may act out inappropriately in order to be removed from the environment. It has also been assumed that he would consume the general education teacher’s attention and time, which would detract from the attention
and time that the other students in the classroom should be entitled to. The structure and personalized attention that he receives in the separate facility have repeatedly been mentioned in his file as essential aspects of his educational programming.

Ivan’s was assessed with the Iowa Tests of Educational Development (Forsyth, Ansley, Feldt, & Alnot, 2001) during his current 11th-grade school year. All of his reported scores were based upon the national percentile rankings. Ivan’s reading total score was at the 8th percentile, his spelling score was at the 1st percentile, his revising written materials score was at the 17th percentile, and his mathematics total score was at the 34th percentile. Furthermore, his social studies score was at the 37th percentile, his science score was at the 51st percentile, his core total score was at the 16th percentile, and his composite score was at the 27th percentile.

Other than the Iowa Test of Educational Development, the researcher was unable to locate any information on recent standardized achievement or cognitive assessments. In addition to a thorough review of Ivan’s academic records, the researcher also consulted with Ivan’s classroom teachers as well as both the school psychologist and the special education consultant on this matter. The school psychologist informed the researcher that there was enough existing data on file in relation to Ivan’s past cognitive and standardized achievement assessments that did not warrant any further or additional testing at the time of his most recent three-year reevaluation. Although the special education consultant conveyed much of the same message to the researcher, it was stated that he would choose to utilize either the long version of the Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement (Woodcock, McGrew, & Mather, 2001) or the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (Karlsen
& Gardner, 1985) if it was shown that Ivan required additional assessment in the future. Though one might consider conducting a functional behavioral assessment with Ivan in order to better understand the function(s) of his current behaviors, school personnel specifically indicated that this procedure was not required at the time as well.

**Student Interview**

The researcher was able to interview Ivan in order to talk to him first hand about some of the issues that had been reported in the past and those issues that existed during the current academic school year. Ivan reported to be currently living at home with his two brothers, two family friends, various pets, and his mother. Ivan’s mother works at a local café in order to financially support her family and is reported to be home from work by the time that Ivan arrives home from school each day. On an average day after Ivan gets home from school, he reported that he typically watches television, eats dinner around 5:00pm, and is free to do whatever he decides to do for the rest of the evening. Ivan is required to be home before 9 o’clock in the evening on all school nights and gets to bed shortly thereafter. Ivan stated that his mother may ground him or lecture him as part of her discipline program and she does make an effort to reinforce her children by giving them extra privileges from time to time.

Ivan enjoys helping out around the house by assisting with the laundry, dishes, mowing of the lawn, pet care, or putting things away when these tasks are necessary. He feels that keeping his brothers out of trouble is part of his role in the family; however, he admits to taking this responsibility on through his own choice. In his free time Ivan also enjoys playing Cribbage (a board & card game), playing Playstation (video games),
working on his martial arts skills, carving wood, listening to music, playing with his pets, camping out, hiking, swimming, fishing, tinkering with cars, building things, climbing trees, and hanging out with his brothers. Ivan considers his social circle to consist of his siblings, his classmates, and some other people who he sees from time to time outside of the school setting. He explained that, in his own opinion, he does not have much of a social life to speak of.

Ivan told the researcher that his mother and father separated from one another before he was even born. Ivan explained that his father moved away to a different state and he did not hear from his father until he was 10 or 11 years of age. Although he does not maintain contact with his father on a consistent basis and it has been over 2 years since he has last seen his dad, Ivan has been able to visit his father on four separate occasions over the years and has enjoyed those experiences. Ivan also explained that he has lived in foster care both when he was a young child and again when he was an adolescent. He said that he had lived with a total of five different foster families in six foster placements over the years (he lived with one family twice) and he had been placed in a youth shelter off and on in grades 6 through 8. Ivan recognized the fact that these changes in living quarters also caused quite a few changes for him in relation to school placements as well.

Ivan reports that overall, he enjoys coming to school because it gets him out of the house, he likes to spend time with his friends, and he enjoys learning about new things. He also feels that the teachers are very nice and supportive of him. For his 12th-grade school year, Ivan expects to stay in school for the entire academic year until he graduates. Ivan also hopes to be integrated into the local high school on a full-time basis and he
envisions himself taking such classes as a shop class, German, choir, and a computer class. He would like to enlist in the military after he completes school and then he would like to enroll in college or a trade school so that he can obtain a good job in the future. His areas of job interests include working as a mechanic on motorcycles, working as an artist, working as an electrician, working as a chef or a cook, and/or working as a carpenter.

In terms of his schooling, Ivan currently reports disliking reading, spelling, and some aspects of his vocations class. On the other hand, he states that he enjoys history, art, social studies, and math. Moreover, he believes that he performs best at his art class and he believes that his worst subject is reading. Yet, Ivan did express a slight desire to find some ways to improve upon his reading and writing skills and he realized that he would be limited in his job opportunities if he was still unable to read after the completion of high school. Ivan did admit that he could probably be doing better with his schoolwork if he chose to put forth more effort. If Ivan was to be given one wish in the entire world, he indicated that he would wish to be the smartest person in the whole world; therefore, the researcher was left to believe that school, learning, and knowledge are all important things to Ivan as part of his own personal value system.

Ivan believes that he was initially labeled as a child with a behavioral disorder because of the fact that he was always getting into fights and was getting into all sorts of trouble when he was younger. He believes that many of these negative behaviors that he exhibited in the past are no longer a problem for him at this stage in his life. For instance, he stated that he has been better able to comply with adult direction and accept constructive criticism when it has been directed towards him in recent experiences.
Moreover, Ivan recognizes the improvement in these areas of behavior because of the low numbers of teaching interactions (an interaction between a staff member and a student in which an inappropriate social skill behavior is identified and an alternative, more appropriate behavior is proposed) that he has received during this current academic school year. He also has heard teachers and other school personnel talking about his improvements in his overall level of maturity and he seems to be proud of this. Ivan stated that he is currently taking three different medications in order to give him extra assistance in dealing with his behaviors. Although he was unsure of the exact names of the medications, he did explain that the medications are essentially intended to help him with his depression and problems with sleeping at night.

Ivan’s Life Story

The researcher conducted an additional interview with the primary research participant in order to obtain more detailed information about Ivan’s life as seen through the eyes of Ivan himself. Essentially, the researcher asked Ivan what he would want the world to know about him if he had the opportunity to tell his own life story. Ivan explained that his earliest recollections about life centered around the time that he was approximately 2 years old. He remembers living at home with his biological mother and living in an apartment that was located above a bar/restaurant. He then remembers being sent to a foster home at the age of 3 and recalls being moved around from one foster placement to another until he was 6 years of age. Ivan remembers living on a farm with one of his foster families and enjoyed the experience of feeding the cows and pigs and taking care of the chickens while staying with this particular surrogate family.
Ivan explained that he then came home to live with his biological mother again in a different home setting and remembers moving from one town to another shortly thereafter. At this time, in Ivan's early elementary school years, he claimed that he began to hang out with the "wrong crowd" of friends. Ivan remembers doing quite a few things that he is not really proud of at this time, as he now looks back upon this experience. He claims to have utilized alcohol and drugs at this time and stated that he also sold drugs from the time that he was 7 years old. Ivan also claimed that he started hanging out with alleged gang members at this time and eventually made friends with others who supported anti-minority white supremacy ideals. He then moved with his family back to the city of his original residence and left many of these friends behind who had been such a negative influence upon him. However, after some time had passed, Ivan decided to make contact with some of these old friends from the neighborhood and started to use drugs and drink alcohol once again. These negative behaviors also led to additional destructive and damaging behaviors as Ivan specifically recalled directly disobeying his mother's requests and demands.

Around this same time period, Ivan remembers that many negative things started happening as a direct or indirect result of his drug and alcohol use/abuse and the friendships that he had built with individuals who introduced him to this particular way of life. Not only did Ivan influence one of his best friends in a poor way by introducing him to drugs and alcohol, but he also remembers losing a girlfriend because of these issues, which resulted in depression and further use/abuse of substances. He was placed on probation for lighting a structure on fire in his hometown along with some of his brothers.
and had further problems with the law during this probationary period. Henceforth, Ivan was sent to a youth shelter and was assigned a Juvenile Court Services officer to oversee him at the age of 12. After going back and forth between placements at his home and the youth shelter, Ivan remembers being placed back into foster care near the end of his seventh-grade school year.

While living within the foster family placement, Ivan remembers continuing to drink, use drugs, and get himself into trouble as the foster family apparently had no knowledge of his ongoing drug and alcohol use/abuse. After his destructive and negative behaviors started to catch up with him, he was eventually sent to a local detention center, had his court date in front of a judge, and was sent back to the youth shelter setting for a period of time. During this time, Ivan remembers a variety of possible foster families coming to the shelter to meet him and he was finally placed with a new foster family at the age of 14. Ivan claims to have continued on with the same destructive and negative behaviors and explained that his level of involvement with drugs and alcohol even increased at this time. For instance, he told the researcher that he made a variety of “road trips” with his friends in order to pick up drugs so that they could bring them back into town and sell and/or use them. More specifically, Ivan claimed to have used and/or sold such drugs as marijuana, heroin, LSD/acid, cocaine, methamphetamines, and any other drugs that he could find.

Due to issues that Ivan wasn’t completely certain of, he was placed into an additional foster family setting for a brief period of time before he finally made it back home to live with his biological mother once again. Ivan reported to be placed back on
probation while he lived at home with his mother and he explained that he went right back to his old negative habits once again after a short period of time had passed. Yet, he explained that he was able to cheat the system as nothing other than tobacco showed up on his urine analyses because he made efforts to flush out his system whenever he thought that he might be tested. After being removed from probation for a period of 1 month, Ivan said that he was caught drinking alcohol once again and as a result, was placed back onto probation immediately. When Ivan was finally released from his probationary sentence for the last time at the age of 16, he went right back to using drugs and alcohol for a short period of time before finally realizing for himself that he had a major problem with addictions.

Ivan was introduced to the idea of seeking help for his problems through an Alcoholics Anonymous program as some family friends came to his home to speak to his older brother about similar issues that he was dealing with at the time. Although Ivan worked to get himself clean with the support of AA, he lost lots of his friends as a result of his decision to avoid using drugs and alcohol. After 6 months of remaining drug and alcohol free, Ivan reported that he relapsed briefly and gained the approval of his friends once again. Yet, after a fairly severe incident of violence that he experienced while intoxicated, Ivan decided once again that it would be in his best interest to get clean for good. Up to this point, Ivan has been drug and alcohol free for a period of 11 months and he seems to be proud of his recent accomplishments. More specifically, Ivan reported to be getting better grades in school, staying out of trouble, and looking for a summer job so that he can save up some money to eventually purchase a car.
In conclusion, Ivan explained that his life has presented him with many ups and downs over the years. Ivan remembers being saddened as he found out that some of his friends and acquaintances had died over the years as a result of suicides, drug overdoses, and other horrific causes. However, he also remembers being happy and excited when he was reunited with his mother, grandmother, and brothers after being placed in foster care during the early years of his life. Although he does not keep in close contact with his father, he also explained that meeting his dad for the first time was a time of joy and excitement for him. After going through so much up to this point, the researcher found Ivan to be a fairly positive minded young man at this stage in his life. Ivan expressed that some of the things that he is currently doing in his life are exciting for him and that he hopes to build upon his happiness as the years go on.

**Parent Interview**

The researcher also took the time to sit down with Ms. Offerman, Ivan’s mother, in order to obtain more detailed information about him and his interactions with his family. Ms. Offerman stated that Ivan currently lives at home with his brothers, two family friends, various pets, and herself. She feels that she has a good relationship with Ivan and feels that Ivan gets along well with others in the household. On an average day at home, she reported that Ivan typically watches television, works or hangs out in the front yard, takes care of his few chores when necessary, attends Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, and gets to bed around 9:00 p.m. or 10:00 p.m. so that he can get a full eight hours of sleep each night. She also explained that in his free time, Ivan enjoys carving and whittling wood, playing card games, swimming, and going fishing. Ms. Offerman believes that his
social circle mainly consists of older individuals from his AA group and she wishes that he would work on obtaining more friends around his same age range.

In regard to Ivan’s health history, Ms. Offerman stated that she was under lots of stress while she was pregnant with Ivan. Her husband had physically and mentally abused her during the pregnancy and she claims to have lost quite a bit of weight as a result. Moreover, she also informed the researcher that her husband had been using drugs before and up to the time of conception without her knowledge. As a young child, Ivan’s temperament was described as physically aggressive during times of anger. However, when he was very young, Ms. Offerman claimed that Ivan was so extremely quiet that she had to set an alarm clock in order to remember when to wake him up and feed him because he never woke up and cried on his own when he was hungry as a young baby. Otherwise, she felt that Ivan developed at the same rate as her other children in reference to crawling, walking, and talking. Ms. Offerman did make mention of the fact that Ivan had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder and attention deficit disorder in the past.

Ms. Offerman claimed that Ivan has had more recent health difficulties that have caused him to be sick and miss school on a frequent basis within the last few years. She explained that the cause of his frequent illnesses was discovered when the doctor found that he had polyps. Because this problem was taken care of, she feels that Ivan’s attendance at school has been much better during this current academic school year. Although she was unsure of the specific names of the products, Ms. Offerman also told the researcher that Ivan is currently taking three different medications to help him with his sleep problems and anger control issues. She also claimed that he had been on a variety of
other medications in the past but was only able to specifically recall that he had been placed on Ritalin at one time. Ivan’s eyesight and hearing have both been checked recently and she felt that his overall health was good at this time. Otherwise, her few health-related concerns for Ivan are that she would like to see him lose some weight and she believes that his medications may be causing him to be groggy when he first gets to school in the morning.

Ms. Offerman still utilizes time-outs, grounding, and takes away privileges as forms of discipline for her children although she no longer feels that these methods are effective with Ivan and his brothers. Ms. Offerman has some concerns regarding Ivan’s behaviors and level of control that he has over his own temper. Although there have been improvements over the years in this area, she still believes that Ivan can be quite volatile and physically explosive. Just a few months ago, Ms. Offerman was forced to physically restrain Ivan because of such behaviors. She expressed that she has concerns about his temper for the future and does not know how well he will be able to cope or adapt in our society when he becomes an independent adult. Nonetheless, she reported having less overall problems with Ivan at home in the past few years because she has been working hard to provide him with a predictable and structured routine that he had not been provided with in past years.

In terms of Ivan’s strengths at school, Ms. Offerman believes that he is good at art and getting along with his peers. Ms. Offerman thinks that the quality of Ivan’s current educational programming is fairly good, however she believes that there are still some improvements that can be made. Most of all, she has some major concerns in relation to
Ivan’s longstanding struggles with reading and writing. Though she has brought this to
the attention of educators throughout Ivan’s educational career, Ms. Offerman doesn’t
believe that anyone has taken her seriously enough to actually do something about
remediating his reading deficits. In fact, Ms. Offerman claimed to the researcher that
when she brought up the issue of Ivan’s reading deficits to one of the members of the
school personnel earlier this year, the individual with whom she spoke claimed to have no
knowledge of any such deficits. Ms. Offerman also sees first hand examples of how Ivan’s
severe difficulties in reading are generalized in the greater community when she takes him
out for dinner and he cannot read most menus. In reference to Ivan’s reading and writing
difficulties, Ms. Offerman has no idea of the etiology of these problems. She simply hopes
to see both the school and Ivan put forth more effort and time towards working on these
deficit areas.

In reflecting back upon Ivan’s early experiences with reading and writing, Ms.
Offerman explained that he did play with pencils and crayons as a child. She also said that
he tried to write on his own and asked for assistance in writing his name and other words
of interest as a youngster. Ms. Offerman provided her children with a toy box that was
filled with books and she took turns reading to her children along with her own mother
when the children were young. She believes that she has always praised the efforts of her
children, she has encouraged her kids to read for fun, the importance of an education has
been emphasized within the home, and she refers to herself as a “book worm” because of
her own love for reading. Currently, she believes that Ivan has a consistent and adequate
place to study, has access to help from his brothers, family friends, and herself, and owns
dictionaries and other necessary resources for when he may need them at home. Therefore, although Ivan's teachers rarely choose to assign homework, Ms. Offerman believes that Ivan would have sufficient conditions at home to complete additional school-related tasks.

Though Ms. Offerman is unsure of Ivan's immediate plans for next year, she does believe that he may opt to take his high school diploma if he earns the necessary credits and he would prefer to immediately find a job rather than deciding to continue to receive special education services into the future. She herself obtained her high school diploma and went on to obtain some additional training in nurse's aid school; therefore, she has expectations for all of her children to do at least the same if not more for themselves. Ms. Offerman would specifically like to see Ivan go on to college or a vocational school in order to build his educational strengths so that he can obtain a job that will allow him to independently support himself in the future. In terms of the jobs that Ivan has expressed an interest in to her, Ms. Offerman believes that he will be looking to work as an artist, a mechanic, or in any job that allows him to be around other people.

School Personnel Interviews

Mr. Creston: Primary Classroom Teacher in the Separate Facility Setting

Mr. Creston reported knowing Ivan personally for at least 5 years now and indicated that he has been a teacher at this school for over 15 years. Mr. Creston feels that he has a special relationship with Ivan and believes that his classroom is the best possible learning environment for Ivan at this time. Mr. Creston would like to see Ivan remain in his classroom for his 12th-grade year in addition to being integrated for a few
classes up at the local high school. He thinks that Ivan is a good example of a student who does well in the stable, predictable, and structured environment that his classroom provides. He further believes that the socialized integration that can be obtained at the high school is very valuable for Ivan as he moves closer towards his graduation into adult life. Mr. Creston thinks that the integration into the high school art class has been one of the best moves that the school has made for this student.

Mr. Creston considers Ivan to be a bright young man who utilizes high-level analytical thinking in conversations with others. He is also a student who has shown great strides in his level of maturity over the past few years. Ivan has a genuine love for learning about history and is a vocal student who frequently participates in class discussions. He is also described as a sociable person who gets along with others in the school and may be described best as an authentic "people person" in the words of Mr. Creston. Ivan does a nice job of following the directions given to him by the classroom teacher and Mr. Creston pointed to improvements in Ivan’s desire to work hard to get things done over the past academic year as well. Ivan has also been doing much better at accepting constructive criticism from teachers and peers than he had been in the past and Ivan’s increase in school attendance has given him further opportunities to improve upon all of the previously mentioned behaviors to a large degree.

Mr. Creston described his relationship with Ivan as a relationship built upon trust and feels that he himself might be one of the best friends that Ivan currently has. He shared with the researcher that Ivan’s personality can appear to be somewhat off-beat and different at times; especially to those individuals who don’t know him very well. Mr.
Creston explained that Ivan first came to him with a desire to keep people at a distance because of his inability to "fit in" socially with others. Ivan’s self-tattooing was just one example of many in which he utilized the element of shock to drive others away. He further explained that Ivan previously had a desire to make others think that he was crazy or "psycho" in order to create a safe amount of space or a "comfort zone" between himself and others. However, because of their strong bond and Mr. Creston’s refusal to accept negative self-statements and behaviors from Ivan, this behavior has been extinguished to a large degree.

Mr. Creston initially described Ivan to the researcher as a nonreader earlier in the semester. However, as the semester has progressed along with the researcher sitting in on classroom lessons from time to time, Mr. Creston has conceded to the fact that although Ivan does have some major reading and writing deficits, he cannot truly be described as a nonreader. Yet, he does continue to believe that Ivan is negatively influenced in many aspects of his life because of these glaring deficits in a skill area that is so fundamental in today’s society. Mr. Creston thinks that Ivan’s reading deficits have been largely ignored for many years because of his more demanding behavior problems that have always stood in the way. Although he is unsure as to which problem area was developed first, either the reading or behavior deficits, he does not believe that this matter is important now and he simply feels that Ivan must be provided with as much assistance as possible in the little time that may remain for him in a formalized educational setting.

Mr. Creston does make the effort to accommodate Ivan’s deficits in the area of reading by reading books out loud to the class and holding frequent discussions relating to
all classroom readings. He also believes that this method of teaching helps to provide Ivan with a model of good reading as he takes turns reading orally with students and his para­educators throughout the school day. Because of the fact that Mr. Creston has created a non-threatening classroom environment, he also encourages Ivan to read things orally to the rest of his classmates as they help him to get through the words and phrases that he struggles with. Mr. Creston also makes the effort to accommodate Ivan’s deficits in the area of writing by having him dictate certain things to him when Ivan feels that he is stuck or when others cannot read what Ivan has written. Mr. Creston does believe that asking Ivan to write out as much as he possibly can with any writing assignment may help to increase Ivan’s confidence in the area of writing as well. Not only does he enforce the teaching of literacy skills to Ivan, Mr. Creston also encourages all of his students to pick up any type of reading material that may be of interest to them in order to further advance their appreciation for reading. Within the classroom, Mr. Creston supports this philosophy by supplying students with access to the internet and a variety of newspapers and popular magazines that he has purchased on his own.

Mr. Creston did acknowledge the fact that he was not trained with a strong background in the areas of reading and writing instruction. Therefore, he felt that Ivan could stand to gain much more in these deficit areas from teachers who had some specific training in reading, writing, literacy, and/or elementary education. Though he has been unable to come up with a suitable resolution to Ivan’s reading and writing difficulties, he does have an appreciation for the work that Mrs. Newton (Ivan’s reading teacher) does with Ivan on a daily basis and has witnessed some resulting areas of improvement. Mr.
Creston also agrees with Mrs. Newton’s assertion that Ivan may need more than one class period of specific reading instruction if he is to be expected to be able to make significant gains. Lastly, Mr. Creston did express the desire to have more testing done with Ivan so that his reading deficits could be further diagnosed and remediated.

Mr. Creston has also provided all of his students with some training in learning how to fill out a job application, how to be a good worker, and how to maintain a job as part of the vocational/social skills/life skills curriculum that he teaches. Because of the needs and age range of the students that he works with, Mr. Creston is obligated to teach transitional and vocational skills to all of his students. However, Mr. Creston does not believe that Ivan has a true understanding of how much reading and writing would be required of him in many of the job areas that Ivan has expressed an interest in up to this point. As jobs continue to require more reading and writing responsibilities, he is worried about Ivan and how he will be able to hold a legitimate job that he can be happy with. However, he does feel that Ivan would have a good opportunity to work in a job or career that provides him with hands-on responsibilities and experiences. He also believes that Ivan would be a loyal employee for anyone who counted on him to be there on the job with consistency. Mr. Creston intends to build upon Ivan’s strengths and to continue to help Ivan to build his skills as he nears the conclusion of his years of formalized education.

Mrs. Newton: Ivan’s Reading Teacher in the Separate Facility Setting

In an interview with Mrs. Newton, Ivan’s reading teacher, she provided the researcher with information regarding Ivan’s current reading placement and the abilities and achievement that he has displayed while working with her. Mrs. Newton explained
that Ivan is pulled from his high school level classroom for his reading/writing instruction and is placed in her room for one period each day. Ivan has struggled a great deal in the area of reading for many years and Mrs. Newton is the junior high teacher who was selected to teach with the reading materials that are at his current level. Although Ivan has only been placed in her reading class during the second semester of the current academic school year, Mrs. Newton is familiar with Ivan because she has previously had Ivan in her classroom on a full-time basis earlier in his educational career.

Mrs. Newton described Ivan as an auditory learner, a student who can develop a deep understanding about things that are of interest to him, one who has wonderful artistic strengths, a pleasant person to be around, a student who has made dramatic improvements in following teacher directives, a student who does well at resisting negative peer attention, and a student who attends to his class work most of the time. However, she also feels that he may not be putting forth his full effort into his work, he is typically reluctant to proofread his work, he still shuts down from time to time when he gets frustrated with things, he is often sleepy and tired when he comes to class, and issues with self-esteem and depression have possibly held him back from performing up to his full potential.

Mrs. Newton expressed her frustration and has some real concerns for how to best serve Ivan at this time in his educational career and has shared some of these concerns with Ivan’s primary classroom teacher (Mr. Creston). She is not certain of the exact barriers in his life that are holding him back from being able to read and has been unable to get him to share this information with her as well. At this point, she provides Ivan with
one class period of reading instruction each day of the week. Yet, because of his deficits and his age, Mrs. Newton believes that this is clearly not enough time in order to provide Ivan with the intensity of instruction that he truly needs. Furthermore, she wonders whether or not he might be best served in a one-on-one reading instruction program. She feels that Ivan’s current IEP goal for learning the Dolch Sight Words is an ineffective goal that should be eliminated and redesigned at the time of Ivan’s annual IEP review later on this current academic school year. Mrs. Newton is in support of teaching Ivan some survival reading skills, although that is not currently a part of the classroom reading curriculum that she delivers.

Mrs. Newton would not describe Ivan as a true “nonreader” or as illiterate because of his ability to produce some words both orally and on paper. She is proud of the overall growth that Ivan has shown as a person over the last few years despite the issues that he has had to face in his life outside of school. She has a desire to see Ivan obtain enough basic skills in his last year of formal schooling so that he can fill out a job application and exhibit other literacy skills that will allow him to function more independently in the real world. Lastly, she mentioned that Ivan’s placement in Mr. Creston’s classroom has been very positive for Ivan and has provided him with some essential stability in his life that he was missing.

Mr. Quest: Art Explorations Teacher at the Local High School (integrated) Setting

In an interview with Mr. Quest, Ivan’s Art Explorations teacher at the local high school, the researcher was able to obtain some information in reference to Ivan’s behavioral, academic, and social performance within an integrated regular education
setting. Ivan participates in this classroom environment for one period each day of the week. There are a total of 28 students in the classroom and many of these students are underclassmen because this course serves as the main prerequisite for all subsequent art classes at the high school. Although Ivan is reported to be very quiet amongst his peers in this setting, he is noted to be very polite and the teacher believes that his classroom peers accept him. Ivan also does well in communicating with the teacher, as he doesn’t hesitate to ask the teacher questions when he needs assistance and he does well at positively accepting teacher feedback.

Though Ivan has been late to class on occasion because of his need to travel to the high school setting specifically for this class, it was reported that he does get to work right away as soon as he arrives and that the teacher understands the reasoning for his occasional tardiness. Mr. Quest also made the comment that Ivan has had no real problems in this classroom environment and that the teacher would welcome him back in order to take additional courses in the future. Mr. Quest did comment on the difficulty in reading Ivan’s written feedback for art critiques because of the virtual illegibility of his writing, however, the teacher has made accommodations for this and the rest of Ivan’s classroom performance meets the expectations of the teacher (i.e., quality of artwork, good attendance, good attitude, willingness to try new things, on-task behavior, etc.).

Mr. Miller: School-Wide Para-Educator in the Separate Facility Setting

Mr. Miller, the school-wide para-educator/integration associate, also took the time to provide information to the researcher through an interview. Mr. Miller has been employed at Ivan’s primary school location for 2 years now, however, he has been
working more directly with Ivan's class during the current academic school year. Mr. Miller primarily provides students with self-advocacy training (i.e., training students to verbalize their own feelings appropriately so that their needs can be met), training for various job/vocational skills, and ideas for the corresponding social skills that students may utilize for the rest of their adult lives. Mr. Miller believes that Ivan has responded well to the self-advocacy training as he has been more verbal than he was in the past, has responded to adults more appropriately, and has improved in his overall coping skills. Mr. Miller does acknowledge the fact that Ivan is somewhat quiet at times and that he still has some difficulties with knowing when and how to appropriately apply the self-advocacy skills.

Most of Mr. Miller's interactions with Ivan have been within the small group classroom setting, however, he has had casual one-on-one interactions with Ivan from time to time when he has stopped in to observe and interact with individuals within Ivan's classroom. He views Ivan as a student who values friendships and building relationships with certain peers, a student who has built some tight bonds with a select group of people who he knows that he can trust (especially his current primary classroom teacher), and a student who is typically polite and cooperative with all staff members. However, Mr. Miller also explains that Ivan can be a student who may become easily agitated at times due to the actions of his peers and a student who might exhibit verbally explosive behaviors if he becomes frustrated and feels that there is no other way to get his feelings out.
In regard to academics, Mr. Miller commented that Ivan is an individual who may not be as vocal as other students during some classroom lessons that he feels less of a connection to, a student who benefits from a small classroom environment and direct hands-on instruction, and a student who needs to be encouraged and prompted in order to get him to participate in certain lessons. Moreover, Ivan was described as a student who provides mostly concrete responses to questions that are posed to him and a student who works best being paired along with a classroom peer; especially for any reading or writing tasks. Mr. Miller lastly explained that Ivan is an individual who enjoys the social interaction aspects of being at school and the feeling of security that it provides to him, which may be due in part to the fact that some of these things may be lacking in Ivan’s home environment.

Mr. Ivy: Special Education Consultant in the Separate Facility Setting

Due to his numerous interactions with Ivan and Ivan’s family over the years, it was also informative to hold an interview with Mr. Ivy, the special education consultant. Mr. Ivy has worked in different schools from time to time with Ivan and various members of his family since Ivan was in the first grade. He stated that Ivan has had a fairly good school year as a result of a significant improvement in his behavior over the last year or so. Mr. Ivy feels that Ivan has truly benefited from improvements in school attendance because the school setting has provided him with structure and stability that he does not necessarily receive in the home environment. He also believes that outside counseling has helped Ivan to develop more mature characteristics than he has shown in the past. Mr. Ivy is happy to see that Ivan has been successful in his integration up at the local high school.
and hopes to see this continue with enrollment into additional courses for the next upcoming academic school year.

Mr. Ivy believes that Ivan's largest problem is his emotional state, which may be influenced, in large part, by his home environment. He also points to Ivan's inability to read as a strong deficit that is likely to work against him as he moves towards finding his place in society in his quickly approaching independent adult life. Due to Ivan's explosive acting-out behaviors that he has exhibited in the past, Mr. Ivy also has some additional but lesser concerns in relation to Ivan's ability to control his emotions and anger, although there have been improvements in these behaviors in the past couple of years. He also felt that this combination of concerns might cause Ivan to have a difficult time with obtaining and maintaining a job in his future.

For the next upcoming academic school year, Mr. Ivy feels that Ivan should remain at his current school setting, and as mentioned previously, he is in favor of further integration opportunities at the local high school. Furthermore, he believes that the school should continue to provide Ivan with transition-related skills and experience-based career education (EBCE) opportunities so that Ivan can build his skills and start to gain an understanding of what he does and does not enjoy about certain jobs that he may currently be interested in. Lastly, Mr. Ivy strongly feels that the school must continue looking into various strategies that may assist Ivan with his reading deficits. If Ivan does not obtain some additional skills in this area, he feels that Ivan may have a difficult time surviving in our current society's structure.
Mr. Timmons: School Psychologist in the Separate Facility Setting

Mr. Timmons, the school psychologist at Ivan’s school, also took the time to share information with the researcher in reference to his understandings of and interactions with Ivan. Mr. Timmons explained that Ivan is a student who has worked hard on building his strengths in the area of utilizing positive social skills in the classroom (i.e., following instructions, accepting criticism, staying on task, being a productive member of the group, and serving as a leader for his peers). Mr. Timmons also gave Ivan additional praise because he has worked diligently to improve his behaviors so that he could earn a class period up at the local high school and had made the decision to stay in school when he had been contemplating dropping out of school at the end of the last academic school year.

However, Mr. Timmons also pointed out that Ivan’s history of behavioral struggles and reading/writing deficits may present problems for him that can continue to remain as areas of difficulty for him well into his adult life. Mr. Timmons also worries that Ivan may not be receiving as much assistance as he could be from both the school and his family in regard to transition planning for his life after high school. Ivan has multiple siblings who have not chosen to establish positive plans of action for themselves and Ivan may be susceptible to falling into a similar pattern of not continuing on with any type of school or vocational training and not holding a job at the conclusion of his formal schooling career. Yet, Mr. Timmons does give credit to Ms. Offerman for working to provide for all of her children and not giving up on them after dealing with many years of academic and behavioral struggles.
Although there are a variety of professionals within the building who are there to help all students who may be in need, Mr. Timmons believes that Ivan's classroom teacher has served as the primary supporter of Ivan since he was placed in Mr. Creston's classroom. Mr. Creston and Ivan have a mutual respect for one another and this seems to be the best classroom placement for Ivan within this particular school setting as this relationship has proved to be quite positive for both parties over the past few years. Mr. Timmons also believes that Mr. Creston does a nice job of teaching to Ivan's strengths and makes Ivan feel as if he has a legitimate place in his classroom and in this world.

Though Ivan has shown lots of growth and maturity in his school behaviors, Mr. Timmons did explain that Ivan has had recent struggles in dealing appropriately with immature comments and actions from his peers. Rather than talking directly with the teacher about his concerns or dealing with these issues in a more socially appropriate manner, Ivan has tried to take some of these issues into his own hands by confronting peers and making verbally threatening remarks. Other than this, Mr. Timmons commented on the fact that Ivan has drastically reduced the number of times that he has been sent out of the room for negative behaviors. He also indicated that the number of teaching interactions has reduced drastically over the past few years and that this is a further indication of Ivan's growth in the area of behavioral control.

Mr. Timmons believes that Ivan's severe learning disabilities in the areas of reading and writing are the most severe that he has ever come into contact with during his career as a school psychologist. Due to the fact that Ivan is functioning cognitively in the low-average to average range, Mr. Timmons felt that his reading deficits could not be
explained by a mental disability. He also believes that Ivan's struggles are not necessarily the result of a motivational deficit and he believes that this is an important factor to take into consideration when designing any future programming for this student. Although Ivan has made very minimal gains in his reading this academic year and his reading teacher has resulting concerns about his motivation, Mr. Timmons personally believes that any student would naturally have motivational deficits after reading and writing endeavors have been unsuccessful for so many years.

Mr. Timmons explained that students entitled to special education services are entitled to these services throughout the entire academic year of their 21st birthday. Therefore, Ivan may need to make the choice next year as to whether or not to accept his high school diploma or to continue to receive special education services based upon his IEP. In terms of next year's programming, Mr. Timmons would like to see Ivan return to his current school placement and also be integrated into some additional classes up at the local high school so that his social skills could continue to be built upon within the general education setting. He would also like to see some additional collaboration between the school and Ivan's family in relation to his transition planning so that Ivan can obtain the supports that he needs.

In conclusion, Mr. Timmons described Ivan as an enjoyable, personable, and mature student who he has had many pleasant interactions with over the years. He does continue to have concerns in connection with Ivan's concurrent social skill deficits and desires to fit in and be a part of a group. When Ivan completes his formalized education and exposes himself to the real world, he may be prone to building social contacts with
other individuals who do not have his best interests in mind. His history of poor decision
making in the past gives Mr. Timmons reason to express these particular concerns and Mr.
Timmons only hopes to continue to see Ivan grow so that he can make positive
independent choices for himself as he moves further into adulthood in the coming years.

Mrs. Engelberger: School Interventionist in the Separate Facility Setting

Mrs. Engelberger, the school interventionist, works directly with students when
they are sent out of their classrooms for any negative behaviors. Her
main role is to help students to process through their areas of difficulty so that they can successfully be placed
back in their respective classrooms. Therefore, it is part of her job responsibility to gain
some knowledge about each and every student’s personality and behaviors so that she can
be better prepared to carry out her role. Mrs. Engelberger has had some interactions with
Ivan over the years and was able to provide the researcher with some additional
information in an interview. Although students are typically sent down to the
interventionist because of arguing or for not following teacher instructions, Ivan is more
frequently sent to see Mrs. Engelberger because of inappropriate comments that he has
made in the classroom. Ivan is a student who gets angry at times, but he is also one of the
few students at the school who is reported to be able to “get over it” and is usually able to
calm himself down within 5 to 10 minutes. This is a specific area of improvement from
the behavioral pattern that Ivan had exhibited in the past.

Mrs. Engelberger stated that although Ivan has a real sense of what he personally
believes to be right and wrong, he has always been honest with her about his mistakes or
the behaviors that have led to his removal from the classroom. Mrs. Engelberger has not
worked with Ivan for at least a month now and reports that the number of times that he has been sent out of the room has decreased drastically within the last few years. She also commented that Ivan is much more mature, that he is a better listener than he was in the past, that he is able to carry on a conversation with others, that there is much less intensity in his negative behaviors, that he is more positive about school than he used to be, and that he is one who makes an effort to help his peers whenever they are struggling.

School Personnel Interviews Summary

In summary, all of the individuals who were interviewed felt that Ivan has made some significant improvements in his behaviors during the past few years. From the drastic reductions in teaching interactions and visits to the interventionist, to the nomination for student of the year candidate at the all-staff meeting, Ivan has clearly made some improvements for himself and it has shown in his maturity and resulting behaviors. More than one individual mentioned that he has been more responsible, that he has artistic strengths, that he is an enjoyable person, and that he enjoys being at school. Ivan seems to have acquired some leadership skills and the intensive social skills curriculum may be one of many pieces of the current curriculum that is paying off for him. Many of the individuals who were interviewed made specific mention of the fact that Ivan would benefit from additional integration into the local high school environment in his senior year.

Yet, all of those individuals who were interviewed also mentioned Ivan’s difficulties with reading. More than one individual mentioned that they were confused as to what must be done for next year in reference to his reading program and the suggestion
for more than one period of reading instruction each day was also made by a few interviewees. Some of those people interviewed spoke about Ivan’s need for additional social skills training and had concerns about his potential to become explosive when he becomes upset. Along with their concerns about Ivan’s home environment, some of the interviewees also seem to have concerns for his future and wonder how independent Ivan will be able to be with some of the low skills that he now exhibits.

Braithwaite (1995) mentions that because of the extensive contact that school personnel typically have with students, they are in a prime position to supply information about those students to researchers and other such information gatherers. The interviews not only served as an additional and valuable piece of current data, but they also served as a clarifier on certain issues that are yet to be resolved. For instance, it became evident that the communication and collaboration between teachers, support services, Ivan’s mother, and others in Ivan’s life could be improved. These improvements would be likely to result in improvements to Ivan’s educational and behavioral programming. When some of Ivan’s teachers mentioned that he comes to school very tired and groggy on a frequent basis, Ms. Offerman may have been able to provide the school with more information in relation to the possible side effects of his current medications. Furthermore, the school would have then been able to consult with their special education nurse, other medical professionals, and Ivan’s mother to see if there could be an easy resolution to this issue.

Additionally, when Mr. Quest mentioned that he had some difficulties reading Ivan’s writing in his art critiques, Ivan’s teacher or other school personnel from the separate facility could have touched base with Mr. Quest to let him know the extent of
Ivan’s learning disabilities and the longstanding problems that he has had with both reading and writing. These are just a few of many examples of how Ivan’s educational programming could be improved with additional communication and collaboration between the home and school environments. Although it may be difficult to expect all involved individuals to consult with one another on a daily basis, the researcher is confident that a more systematic plan can be put into place and that Ivan and other similar students in the school would benefit from such a program.

**Recent Work Samples**

The researcher obtained a permanent product of one piece of Ivan’s class work from his reading teacher, Mrs. Newton. Mrs. Newton explained that this particular assignment was a spelling review of words that the students had been practicing with for quite some time. The students had studied the beginnings and endings of similar words on their list so that they could more easily identify the correct spelling patterns of certain key vocabulary words. The students were to write the words out one-by-one while utilizing correct spelling and capitalization as the teacher read them out loud to the class.

Mrs. Newton reported that by far, Ivan performed at the lowest level of all of the students in her reading class on this particular quiz. Ivan missed 15 out of a total of 63 words on his quiz even though Mrs. Newton felt that the students had studied the words in depth for a significant period of time. Moreover, she also reported that she felt as if she was at a loss for an explanation after reviewing his mistakes. Some of the mistakes made absolutely no sense to her, as Ivan was able to successfully spell other words that were very similar in both sound and spelling form. For instance, Ivan appropriately spelled the
word “kick” as k-i-c-k, however he was unsuccessful in his spelling of the word “pick” as he spelled this word out as p-i-k. Other mistakes, in Mrs. Newton’s opinion didn’t even come close to resembling the word that she had dictated to the class. For example, Ivan spelled the word “lab” as l-a-m-d and spelled the word “have” as h-a-v-y.

In an additional example of a work sample from Ivan’s reading class, the researcher chose to informally observe one of Mrs. Newton’s reading lessons while taking anecdotal notes on any interesting teaching methods or happenings within the classroom. The researcher observed students writing out sentences that were to include at least one or more of the vocabulary words that the class had been studying that week. Mrs. Newton reminded the students to check over their work to make sure that it was free of any grammatical and spelling mistakes. The students were asked to include as many or as few words as they needed in order to create their sentences with very few additional guidelines imposed for this assignment except that the students were expected to include a subject, a verb, a capital letter at the start of the sentence, and proper punctuation at the end of the sentence. Ivan produced the following sentence: “My boy is lack hes speed.”

In addition to producing the aforementioned sentence, it was necessary for Ivan to obtain assistance with the spelling of the word “speed” because of his uncertainty with the spelling of this one particular word. Therefore, besides his need for assistance in writing out and spelling a fairly basic word for most 11th-grade students, Ivan was also only able to produce a six-word sentence that had an additional misspelling, and as it was grammatically written, the sentence did not make good logical sense.
Finally, the researcher was able to obtain more insight into Ivan's capabilities during a school-wide activity in which all of the classrooms were to have read a book before finally having the opportunity to discuss it with a special guest speaker during a scheduled school assembly. Although the researcher did not take part in reading the novel along with any of the students, the researcher did sit in as an audience member during this assembly. The researcher observed Ivan participating in the assembly as the guest speaker posed various questions from the book to the audience of students. Though a variety of students in the school were able to create a dialogue with the speaker in response to the questions, Ivan was one of very few students in his particular classroom that participated. Therefore, even though he did not do much direct reading of the book himself because of his lack of sufficient reading skills, his listening skills and participation in classroom discussions allowed him to be an active and informed participant in this literacy-based event. It must be mentioned that although Ivan's input was not documented as a permanent product in this instance, the researcher did believe that this observation of Ivan's behavior could appropriately serve as an additional sample of Ivan's work.

Work Samples Summary

This collection of work samples helps to provide a snapshot of the performance that Ivan has exhibited recently in his schoolwork. The spelling test provided the researcher with one example of the high level of deficits that Ivan continues to display in the area of reading/writing. Moreover, the open-ended sentence-writing activity lends further credence to the difficulties in the areas of literacy that were mentioned by multiple members of the school personnel who have worked closely with Ivan over the years.
However, Ivan’s active and relevant participation in the school-wide assembly may provide individuals with additional hope and optimism that Ivan can gain something of value from literacy experiences. Therefore, one may still be able to find unique avenues of instruction to spark Ivan’s interest in becoming more proficient at both reading and writing.

**Classroom Observations**

The researcher conducted behavioral observations in order to gain additional insight into Ivan’s performance within the classroom setting. More specifically, the researcher was interested in investigating the role of on-task versus off-task behaviors on Ivan’s educational functioning. Due to the multiple reports of Ivan’s chronic sleepiness or lethargic state during school, the researcher was interested in observing the levels of engagement that Ivan exhibited across multiple settings and academic tasks. As Sattler (2001) explains, observations may provide information with respect to factors that may be directly or indirectly related to problematic behaviors exhibited by individuals. When these factors are identified, interventions can then be developed and resulting changes in behavior can be monitored across time.

The first classroom observation was conducted on 4/28/03 in Ivan’s social skills class for a period of 20 minutes. The classroom activities during the observation consisted of watching a film, working on a corresponding worksheet, and conferencing with the teacher at the end of the class period. There were four students in the classroom along with one teacher and two para-educators. The observation data were as follows in Table 1.
Table 1

Data From the First Classroom Observation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Ivan</th>
<th>Random Peers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-task</td>
<td>100% of observed intervals</td>
<td>88% of observed intervals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal off-task</td>
<td>0% of observed intervals</td>
<td>0% of observed intervals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor off-task</td>
<td>0% of observed intervals</td>
<td>12% of observed intervals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive off-task</td>
<td>0% of observed intervals</td>
<td>0% of observed intervals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ivan exhibited the following on-task behaviors: (a) watching the film, (b) waiting patiently for further instructions from the teacher, (c) working quietly on his worksheet, (d) following the para-educator’s instructions, (e) not reacting to sarcastic peer comments, and (f) displaying honesty to the teacher while conferencing.

The entire class chose not to take notes during the showing of the film, although it was never specifically stated that this was a necessary requirement. The primary classroom teacher, Mr. Creston, was out of the room during most of the period, although a recently hired para-educator and Mr. Miller were both in the room for the entire period. Mr. Creston told the class that they had done a nice job with the new para-educator in their classroom on this day.

The second classroom observation was conducted on 5/6/03 once again in Ivan’s social skills class for a period of 17 minutes. The classroom activity for the day consisted
of watching a film. There were five students in the classroom along with one teacher and two para-educators. The observation data were as follows in Table 2.

Table 2

*Data From the Second Classroom Observation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Ivan</th>
<th>Random Peers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-task</td>
<td>96% of observed intervals</td>
<td>83% of observed intervals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal off-task</td>
<td>0% of observed intervals</td>
<td>0% of observed intervals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor off-task</td>
<td>0% of observed intervals</td>
<td>17% of observed intervals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive off-task</td>
<td>4% of observed intervals</td>
<td>0% of observed intervals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ivan exhibited the following on-task behavior: watching the film as expected of him. Ivan displayed the following passive off-task behavior: looking over at a peer who was blurting out as Mr. Creston reminded the entire class to "watch the film" as to prompt all students to remain on-task.

Once again, this was not a particularly structured class period. The students were simply expected to remain quiet and to watch the film. Ivan had his head resting on his hand for most of the period but he remained quiet, watched the film, and kept his eyes open. Mr. Creston started a dialogue with students from time to time based upon certain scenes in the movie and the students also carried on casual unrelated conversations during the film, although they were supposed to be holding quiet conversations that focused upon
specific issues from the film. The intended 20-minute observation was cut short because Ivan left the classroom early to head off for his art class up at the local high school.

The third classroom observation was conducted on 5/15/03 in Ivan’s reading class for a period of 20 minutes. The classroom activities during the observation consisted of looking up examples of plural nouns and highlighting them in a copy of the newspaper and then sharing the plural nouns with peers as students were asked to write examples of their words on the blackboard for all classroom peers to view and discuss. There were five students in the classroom along with one lead teacher. The observation data were as follows in Table 3.

Table 3

*Data From the Third Classroom Observation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Ivan</th>
<th>Random Peers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-task</td>
<td>88% of observed intervals</td>
<td>100% of observed intervals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal off-task</td>
<td>0% of observed intervals</td>
<td>0% of observed intervals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor off-task</td>
<td>3% of observed intervals</td>
<td>0% of observed intervals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive off-task</td>
<td>9% of observed intervals</td>
<td>0% of observed intervals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ivan displayed the following on-task behaviors: (a) looking through the newspaper for words, (b) listening attentively to the teacher lecture, and (c) participating in the activity when called upon to do so. He also took part in the following motor off-task
behavior: blurt out and interrupting the teacher when he was not ready to move on to the next task. Lastly, Ivan exhibited the following passive off-task behaviors: (a) not looking up to the front of the classroom when the teacher was speaking, and (b) staring off during the lesson.

This was a fairly structured classroom environment where the classroom teacher expected all of the students to be participating in the activity. Although Ivan exhibited appropriate behaviors during most of the classroom period, he started to become very anxious and distracted when he knew that it was technically time for him to be back in Mr. Creston's classroom.

The fourth and final classroom observation was conducted on 5/15/03 during both Ivan's literacy and history classes for a period of 20 minutes. The classroom activity consisted of reading out loud and listening to others read from a novel for literacy class and a discussion and some reading in a textbook for history class. There were five students in the classroom along with one teacher and one para-educator. The observation data were as follows in Table 4.
Table 4

Data From the Fourth Classroom Observation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Ivan</th>
<th>Random Peers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-task</td>
<td>97% of observed intervals</td>
<td>88% of observed intervals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal off-task</td>
<td>0% of observed intervals</td>
<td>0% of observed intervals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor off-task</td>
<td>0% of observed intervals</td>
<td>0% of observed intervals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive off-task</td>
<td>3% of observed intervals</td>
<td>12% of observed intervals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ivan displayed the following on-task behavior: (a) looking along in his book, (b) participating by doing some reading out loud, (c) participating in the discussion, (d) filling out his point sheet when called upon to do so, (e) listening to the lecture, and (f) taking out his supplies when he was asked to do so. Ivan also exhibited the following passive off-task behavior: looking over at a peer who was making an inappropriate comment when he should have been looking along in his book.

These back-to-back class periods were both somewhat relaxed where students could feel free to ask questions to the teacher and one another at any time. Although the teacher did provide some basic guidelines and structure, he allowed the students to have general freedom in their give-and-take of feedback and cooperative group understanding of the topics that were discussed.
Classroom Observations Summary

In both formal and informal observations of Ivan in the general classroom environment, his behaviors were found to be appropriate and appeared to be under his immediate control. Ivan seems to be on-task most of the time and he does participate at times by verbally responding to the teachers and his classroom peers. Although Ivan’s on-task behaviors appear to be very high in frequency as evidenced by the classroom observations and teacher reports, it is the opinion of the researcher that Ivan may have been quite passive in his participation during many of the observed intervals. Moreover, the researcher has informally observed Ivan throughout the spring semester and believes that Ivan can appear to be listening as part of the group at times when he is not truly paying attention to the lesson or task that has been given to him. Therefore, it may be necessary to specifically engage Ivan in activities that will “grab” and sustain his attention if one is to ever know whether Ivan is giving a task his full and undivided attention or not.

It must be noted that the researcher conducted these observations after revealing himself and his intentions directly to Ivan. Therefore, both the reliability and validity of the data may need to be called into question. The Human Participant Protection guidelines required the researcher to obtain a letter of informed consent from all participants and a letter of assent from Ivan himself prior to the approval and commencement of the study. This was a major factor in the researcher’s decision to avoid conducting a classroom observation in Ivan’s art class at the local high school. Although it would have been beneficial to observe in as many settings as possible, the presence of the researcher would have been overly intrusive and it would have been extremely clear to
Ivan that the researcher was there specifically to observe him. It must also be noted that behavioral observations simply provide a sample of one's behavior at the point in time that the observation is conducted. Although a partial interval recording of behavior is a common and popular form of assessment, one should not forget that it can be influenced by all of the reliability and validity factors that have been previously mentioned.

Reading Difficulties

Ivan has had, and continues to have, serious reading deficits in his reading ability and performance. In fact, his current primary classroom teacher (Mr. Creston) has indicated that Ivan is a virtual nonreader and that he currently performs at the second-grade level in his reading. Moreover, Mrs. Newton (Ivan’s reading teacher) has administered some pre-tests in the reading curriculum that she is currently utilizing and found Ivan’s reading level to be at the kindergarten/beginning first-grade level. Although this has been an identified area of difficulty for many years now, Ivan continues to need intensive intervention and assistance in reading if he can expect to be able to meet his long-term life goals in a society that continues to rely more and more heavily upon this skill.

Working to become a skilled reader within our current societal structure can be a very challenging task. In most, if not all western societies, people utilize their reading skills for a variety of purposes including entertaining themselves, building knowledge and interests, finding comfort, relaxation, and peace for oneself, and performing everyday duties and tasks. More specific examples of how reading is utilized in everyday situations include the common tasks of paying bills, obeying road-signs, writing checks, shopping for
groceries, following cooking recipes, reading driving directions, finding out what is going to be on television, ordering food at a restaurant, and so on. If the opportunity to learn how to read is overlooked, neglected, or lost in the early stages of life, it becomes extremely difficult, if not unattainable, to build this skill to an adequate level later on in life (Davidson & Koppenhaver, 1993).

As Gunning (2002) explains, “failure to learn to read can be both a cause and effect of social and emotional problems” (p. 61) and Ivan has historically been shown to have problems in both of these areas. Although we might be able to make an educated guess as to which of these two entities first became a problem for Ivan, the desire by some to solve this argument may be an irrelevant venture at this point. What we do know is that Ivan can expect to continue to struggle in his adult life if improvements are not seen in his reading and writing skills. Those who struggle with reading well into their adult lives are more likely to be held back from independently having the everyday needs of their lives met than those who are more proficient at such literacy skills (Gunning, 2002; Joseph, 2002; Ruchlis, 1973).

The old proverb that practice makes perfect is a very relevant saying in the field of literacy (Allington, 2001). Those who spend more time with reading and make the effort to do so are more likely to be proficient at the task. In Ivan’s case, there have been many years where his behaviors have taken precedence over his academic needs and his time spent on reading can be assumed to have been a minimal priority at best. In addition to the increased levels of practice in reading, students who struggle with reading are likely to benefit from daily authentic reading and writing tasks that allow them to see how literacy
is utilized in the real world (Vacca et al., 2003). Vacca et al. (2003) also explain that simply listening to others who model fluent reading on a regular basis can help individuals who struggle with reading to understand how a proficient reader typically sounds. Furthermore, those individuals who struggle with simply sounding out words are said to have problems in the area of phonological awareness (Joseph, 2002). This critical skill appears to be a fundamental area in which Ivan needs additional and specific training. Lastly, Joseph (2002) explains that the essential elements for any reading and writing program should include instruction focused upon shaping, scaffolding, constructing meaning, connecting to prior knowledge, motivating students, and providing students with opportunities to learn.
CHAPTER 3
INTERVENTION AND REMEDIATION ISSUES

Academic Intervention and Instructional Recommendations

In past years, Ivan's academic goals and specific areas of need as listed on his IEP's have included reading and writing the Dolch basic sight vocabulary words, comprehending and doing math problems, completing his work accurately without careless mistakes, developing basic reading skills, developing basic writing mechanics, transition planning, identifying career interests, improving articulation skills, identifying and writing the letters of the alphabet, and improving fine motor and visual motor skills. Ivan's current IEP requires him to work on one particular academic goal during his 11th-grade academic school year. Specifically, Ivan's goal is to have mastered the Dolch Sight Word Vocabulary List by being able to orally read all of the 220 basic sight vocabulary words with accuracy.

The researcher conducted a follow-up interview with both Mr. Creston and Mrs. Newton in order to find out more detailed information concerning what is being done for Ivan in the classroom in terms of academic instruction. More specifically, the researcher asked both teachers what is currently being done with Ivan in both of their classrooms in regard to specific academic interventions, instructional planning, daily programming, progress monitoring, review of student progress, and modification of programming as needed. The researcher felt that a joint interview with both of Ivan's core subject classroom teachers would provide a more complete description of the academic instruction that he is receiving and the communication and collaboration that the two
teachers are utilizing between one another in order to best serve Ivan within the classroom.

Interview with Core Teachers

Mrs. Newton started the interview off by explaining that although she has a special education degree, a learning disability degree, and an elementary education degree, she was not specifically trained to be a reading teacher. However, Mrs. Newton did believe that it was important to mention to the researcher that she was going back to obtain additional training so that she could build upon her skill set and provide a more thorough education to her students, especially in the subject area of reading. On the other hand, Mr. Creston stated that he is a secondary level teacher and made the claim that his teaching certificate states that reading is specifically one of the subject areas that he is not qualified to teach. Although he may be indirectly teaching reading skills to his students throughout his daily instruction, his primary objective is to specifically teach each core area of the established curriculum as it was meant to be delivered to the students.

School personnel cooperatively decided to place Ivan in Mrs. Newton’s classroom for reading instruction because of the fact that she was selected as the teacher who would teach the particular program that best fit Ivan’s needs. Moreover, up to this point, Ivan had not been receiving any direct reading instruction at this separate school facility setting prior to this current semester because of the lack of program availability and Ivan’s history of outright refusal to accept any additional assistance with his reading. Although the practice of placing a high school level student in a classroom of middle school level students for remedial reading instruction was not researched specifically by any of the
school personnel, this move was made out of necessity and both teachers have made sure to touch base with Ivan to make sure that he was personally okay with the decision.

Mr. Creston mentioned that he does try to instruct all of his students in the area of reading by introducing them to various forms of high school level literature. Ivan generally participates in Mr. Creston’s classroom by listening to the readings and lectures in all class periods, providing relevant input in discussions, and reading from time to time with assistance from others within the classroom. Mr. Creston stated that he does try to get his para-educator to assist Ivan with most of his in-class writing assignments so that Ivan can get his insightful ideas down onto paper. He also helps Ivan by reading things out loud to him such as test questions and other information that Ivan cannot interpret for himself. Although there is not much direct teaching of reading or writing in his high school-level classroom, Mr. Creston does ask his students to focus upon certain vocabulary words and he also teaches his students how to utilize context clues when they become stumped in any of their readings.

Mr. Creston told the researcher that he tries to provide his students with an overall curriculum that they would typically receive in a general education high school classroom with the inclusion of such activities as lectures, group readings, watching videos, and individual or group projects. Mr. Creston describes Ivan as a student who has very high-level thinking skills, which also allows him to participate in discussions and become actively involved in the classroom with both his peers and instructors. Although Mr. Creston does provide some in-class modifications for Ivan such as providing various visual and verbal clues, reading test questions out loud to him, and writing things out for him
from time-to-time, Mr. Creston does feel that he tries to include Ivan in as much of the reading and writing as possible. He explained that it is very important for Ivan to feel as if he is a productive and contributing member of the class and that all members of the classroom help to facilitate this inclusive atmosphere including the other students.

When the researcher asked about any specific academic interventions that are being provided to Ivan, Mrs. Newton explained that the Language! program ("Language!", n.d.) from Sopris West is the literary intervention curriculum currently being delivered to Ivan in her classroom. She explained that the school obtained the necessary materials for the program half way through the current academic school year and decided that this would be the best program to start with Ivan. Mrs. Newton explained that this curriculum is multi-sensory and that she supports this curriculum because it incorporates various literary constructs into one program including reading, writing, spelling, grammar, language, and vocabulary. She explained that Ivan placed right at the beginning level of the curriculum as his pre-test scores fell within the pre-kindergarten to first-grade levels.

Mrs. Newton feels that Ivan shows some signs of growth at times and is simply not able to perform some of the same tasks a few days later. She stated that she is in a little bit of a quandary about Ivan’s situation as there is confusion about what things are truly holding him back. Mrs. Newton told the researcher that there is an established plan for a group of certain school personnel to get together at sometime over the upcoming summer months and discuss what the next steps should be for his programming. For instance, there has already been some preliminary discussion about the school looking into the
possibility of consulting with or hiring a reading specialist for additional help with this situation. Mrs. Newton is hopeful that Ivan will be able to show growth in the area of literacy and wishes that this type of intensive assistance was available to him at an earlier stage in his educational career.

Mrs. Newton stated that the Language! program ("Language!", n.d.) allows her to monitor Ivan's progress on a daily basis. When the researcher asked whether or not the program shows Ivan's gains and/or losses in specific curricular areas, Mrs. Newton explained that although she doesn't keep specific numbers for her progress monitoring, she is able to look at his work samples and make an informal evaluation of his progress. In her perception, Ivan is a student who frequently moves up and down in his level of progress and it is difficult to connect this variability to any specific factors. Yet, if she was to make an educated guess at the factors that have the largest impact upon his inconsistency, Mrs. Newton believes that his mood, level of motivation, and the amount of sleep that he has had the night before are some of the primary causes.

Mr. Creston jumped into the conversation and informed the researcher that the mere fact that Ivan is here at school, attending on a regular basis, keeping himself out of the intervention room, and has the desire to learn is a major step forward for Ivan based upon past experiences. Although Mr. Creston acknowledged that he was also guilty of not keeping much in the way of numbers on Ivan's progress, he believes that Ivan has certainly made great improvements as of late. Additionally, Mr. Creston believes that although we may be shifting to an educational era in which people want to see specific numbers, in his own opinion, too much progress monitoring and number crunching can
actually reduce the quality of overall teaching that is provided to students. Mr. Creston had worked with nonreaders in the past and it is his personal belief that these individuals can still find ways to be independent and productive members of our society. Although Ivan’s situation has frustrated many of his past and present teachers, Mr. Creston made it clear that they haven’t given up on him, they are still holding out hope for his potential to grow, and they expect to see some positive changes made in the near future.

Mrs. Newton joined back into the conversation by adding more specific details about the planning that the school is doing for Ivan in what could be his last year of formalized education. Due to the fact that she has only been working with Ivan on his reading issues for one semester, it is difficult to tell if the Language! program has really kicked in for him or not. However, in addition to the Language! program, school personnel have also explored the idea of hiring a one-on-one tutor or instructor and they have decided to have Ivan take part in two periods of reading instruction per day rather than the current approach of providing only one. Moreover, the Dolch Sight Words goal will be removed from Ivan’s IEP as this longstanding goal has been both unsuccessful and inappropriate for him. Rather, a goal of getting Ivan to perform at the second-grade level in reading and to read a specific set of survival words at 100% accuracy will be added as Ivan’s academic IEP goal for the next upcoming school year. Both teachers also plan to continue to teach Ivan some additional survival reading skills, apart from his IEP requirements, so that he can independently fill out job applications, read road signs, and do some of the other everyday tasks that require these basic reading skills.
Mr. Creston and Mrs. Newton both agree that it is likely that Ivan's behaviors have helped to hide or mask his academic deficits for many years now. It appears that even when his behaviors were starting to become under his own control, Ivan would exhibit poor behaviors just as soon as he felt that he was being challenged academically. Both educators feel that this pattern of behavior caused Ivan to fall further and further behind with each passing year. However, Mrs. Newton also stated that Ivan's lack of consistency in the home environment, personal issues, and other such compounding factors are likely factors in his strong academic deficit areas that we now see today. Now that Ivan's behaviors seem to be under control for the most part, both teachers would like to see him open up a whole new world for himself by learning how to read.

Language!: A Literacy Intervention Curriculum

The Language! curriculum program ("Language!", n.d.) is the primary piece of reading curriculum that is now being utilized with Ivan in the classroom. This particular program claims to serve children in grades 1 through 12 and it is geared towards assisting students who have delays in reading, writing, and spelling. The materials assist teachers by providing suggestions for placement decisions, lesson planning, progress monitoring, and establishing a positive classroom environment for student learning. The program itself consists of 54 sequential and cumulative units that are divided into 3 different levels (Greene, Eberhardt, Whitney, & Moats, 2000). The Language! curriculum program also has a web site (http://www.language-usa.net/) that provides much more specific information about the entire program and offers links to newspaper and research articles that have done reviews of the program in the recent past.
More specifically, the site explains that the curriculum is intended for students who are performing two or more years behind their grade-level placement. It also states that the Language! curriculum program has been found to be successful for many students because of its research-based approach, comprehensive methodology, provision of ongoing student assessment, and undemanding ability to individualize instruction for every student. The instruction is so broad that it includes specific lessons covering the areas of speaking/listening, phonology, phonemic awareness, orthography, phonics, word recognition, spelling, syllabication, text reading, vocabulary, comprehension, morphology, semantics, figurative language, grammar/usage, mechanics, syntax, and composition. The explicit goal of the Language! curriculum program is to provide students with accelerated learning experiences that will allow them to return to or move closer to their intended grade-level literacy placements. In addition to the support from an interrelated pilot study, the site claims that this overarching goal has been met by even some of the most severely at-risk students ("Language!", n.d.).

Mrs. Jane Fell Green's pilot study (Greene, 1996) was initiated because of the urgent need for additional research regarding successful interventions for adolescents who had been diagnosed with severe reading deficits. The pilot study ran for a total of 12 months and utilized the Language! curriculum with a total of 45 middle and high school juvenile offenders who were enrolled in a rehabilitation program. An additional group of 51 juveniles placed in the same type of setting served as the comparison group and did not receive their literacy instruction from the Language! curriculum. The standard pretest scores of the participants revealed that they all had significant delays in the areas of
reading acquisition, spelling, and writing prior to the commencement of the study (Greene, 1996).

The participants in the treatment group were introduced to the Language! curriculum and progressed at their own rates with the specific content of the curriculum being implemented based upon individual student need rather than a previously established set of guidelines. The Gray Oral Reading Tests (Wiederholt & Bryant, 1992), the Written Expression subtest of the Peabody Individualized Achievement Test (Markwardt, 1989), and the Wide Range Achievement Test (Wilkinson, 1993) were utilized with all participants to measure the effects of the intervention curriculum or lack thereof. Although participants in both groups naturally made gains as a result of additional schooling, results indicated that participants in the treatment group made significant gains in the areas of word identification, spelling, comprehension, and composition in an average span of 22 weeks of instruction. This study claimed to lend further credence to existing data that supports direct instruction of phonemic awareness to students who struggle with reading, writing, and spelling (Greene, 1996).

**Behavioral/Emotional Intervention**

In past years, Ivan's behavioral goals and specific areas of need listed on his IEP's have included maintaining appropriate school behaviors, avoiding high numbers of school absences, organizing his school materials, developing skills in compliance with directions, developing skills in accepting constructive criticism, enhancing independent living skills, developing social skills needed to facilitate friendships, decreasing his levels of physical aggression, avoiding time-outs, developing skills in appropriately gaining the teacher's
attention, making appropriate requests, developing cooperative play skills with same age peers, and improving compliance within the home.

Ivan’s current IEP requires him to work on one particular behavioral goal during his 11th-grade academic school year. Specifically, Ivan’s goal is to demonstrate the ability to accept criticism (from classroom staff members) by averaging less than 0.20 teaching interactions per day based upon the school-wide management system. Mr. Creston, Ivan’s primary classroom teacher, established this behavioral goal for Ivan based upon the fine records that had been kept over the previous school year. Ivan demonstrated a need to specifically work on improving this particular social skill and Mr. Creston was counted upon to monitor Ivan’s progress, or lack thereof, throughout the academic school year.

Ivan’s current IEP also stated that he continues to require direct instruction in social/life skills as well as a comprehensive behavioral management system. Ivan’s school utilizes a behavioral management system that gives the students some level of power in making decisions, tries to catch the students doing good, is not based upon an us-versus-them mentality, and places a high level of responsibility upon the students themselves. In addition to the aforementioned features, the separate school facility has a set of 12 social skills that they expect all students to be working on while at school. These 12 social skill areas include: (a) how to use body basics; (b) how to problem solve; (c) how to follow instructions; (d) how to accept criticism, consequences, or no; (e) how to greet someone; (f) how to stay on-task; (g) how to get help; (h) how to listen; (i) how to interrupt correctly; (j) how to participate in a group; (k) how to give criticism or disagree; and (l) how to resist peer pressure or teasing. It is the intention of the school-wide behavior
management system to directly instruct and reinforce these social skills for all of the students in the special school setting.

As a large part of the school management system, school personnel utilize a teaching interaction as a nonconfrontational interaction between a staff member and a student in which an inappropriate social skill behavior is identified and an alternative, more appropriate behavior is proposed. More specifically, a teaching interaction is made up of eight successive steps which include: (a) an expression of affection, (b) initial praise, (c) a description of the inappropriate behavior, (d) a description of an alternative appropriate behavior, (e) a rationale, (f) acknowledgement/demonstration, (g) consequence, and (h) general praise. When students receive a certain number of teaching interactions within a predetermined amount of time, they are typically sent down to the school interventionist (Mrs. Engelberger). The interventionist works to help the student to calm down and productively work through their problems before the student is sent back to the classroom to present a formal apology to the teacher or para-educator who sent them out of the room. Although the student loses points for the multiple teaching interactions and for being sent out of the room, the student can earn back some of their points based upon the quality and sincerity of their apology and the length of time that they are out of the room.

During Ivan’s 10th-grade school year, it was reported that he received teaching interactions in the areas of following instructions (13), accepting criticism (72), and group participation (15). Although records have been kept for all of the years that Ivan has attended the separate school facility, these particular social skills were some of the most recent ones that Ivan had been struggling with. However, the researcher found that Ivan’s
teaching interactions in these areas have been reduced drastically in his current 11th-grade academic year and many of the school personnel have also recognized these improvements. As a result of these improvements, the researcher found out that Ivan’s behavioral goal for his senior year would be altered slightly from his current goal as stated in his IEP. More specifically, Mr. Creston stated that Ivan would be expected to demonstrate appropriate social skills by obtaining fewer than 0.15 teaching interactions per school day as a part of his new set of IEP goals.

The following table (Table 5) provides information regarding Ivan’s teaching interactions as found in Mr. Creston’s fine records for the current academic school year. The first column lists the specific social skill, the second column lists the number of teaching interactions recorded in that social skill area as of 4/29/03 (158 days into the school year), and the third and final column provides information regarding the number of teaching interactions in each social skill area per each school day.
**Table 5**

*Recordings of Ivan’s Teaching Interactions During the Current Academic School Year*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Skill</th>
<th>Number of Teaching Interactions as of 4/29/03</th>
<th>Teaching Interactions per-day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being on time</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turning in point sheets</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body basics</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following instructions</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting criticism</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate greeting</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying on-task</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriately seeking help</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate listening</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrupting others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate participation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving criticism/disagreeing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teasing others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Current Medications**

As previously mentioned, Ivan has been tried on a variety of medications over the years and the researcher believes that these medications were mostly intended to help Ivan to better control or regulate his behaviors. In terms of the identified medications that Ivan
has taken this year, the list includes such medications as Wellbutrin, Zoloft, Prozac, and Risperidone. As also mentioned previously, medications that he has taken in the past include Thioridazine and Prozac (ninth grade), Zoloft (eighth grade), Ritalin, (seventh grade), and Hydroxyzine (second grade through eighth grade). Due to the fact that the researcher was unable to consult directly with the special education nurses that have overseen Ivan throughout the years, the researcher felt that it may be helpful to provide a brief description of the medications, the general purposes that they serve, and any common side effects or interactions that are common to each drug and that Ivan has exhibited to any degree. However, it must be mentioned that the researcher cannot be exactly sure of all of the medications that Ivan has taken over the years and the purposes, side effects, and interactions experienced by Ivan cannot be specifically confirmed.

Wellbutrin, otherwise known as bupropion hydrochloride, is commonly prescribed to reduce particular forms of major depression in individuals and works as a stimulant. Side effects of this drug may include such symptoms as agitation, anxiety, abdominal pain, headache, sleep disturbances, and/or a sore throat. The effects of Wellbutrin may be increased, decreased, or otherwise altered if it is taken along with other particular medications including Risperidone/Risperdal, Prozac, and/or Zoloft. Individuals must also take care to avoid consuming alcohol while taking Wellbutrin because of the heightened risk for seizures (Sifton, Connor, Murray, & Kelly, 2002). Zoloft, also known as Sertraline, is typically prescribed for individuals who are having problems with major depressive disorder and obsessive compulsive disorder. It may also be utilized for those who are suffering from panic disorder and/or posttraumatic stress disorder. Zoloft
functions to boost the levels of serotonin available to the brain, which in turn, helps to balance one's mood. Side effects of this drug may include such symptoms as abdominal pain, agitation, anxiety, diarrhea, dizziness, fatigue, headache, insomnia, sleepiness, and/or vomiting. The effects of Zoloft may be increased, decreased, or otherwise altered if it is taken along with other particular medications including Prozac (Sifton et al., 2002).

Prozac, also called fluoxetine hydrochloride, is mainly utilized to treat major depression and obsessive compulsive disorder. Prozac also functions to boost the levels of serotonin available to the brain, which in turn, helps to balance one's mood. Side effects of this medication may include anxiety, dizziness, flu-like symptoms, headache, insomnia, sleepiness, sore throat, upset stomach, vomiting, and/or yawning. Just as the case was with Wellbutrin and Zoloft, the effects of Prozac may be increased, decreased, or otherwise altered if it is taken along with other particular medications including most other antidepressants (Sifton et al., 2002). Risperidone, otherwise known as Risperdal, is typically prescribed in order to treat schizophrenia. Side effects associated with this medication may include abdominal pain, agitation, aggression, anxiety, chest pain, coughing, diarrhea, dizziness, fever, headache, inability to sleep, increased duration of sleep, nausea, respiratory infection, sleepiness, sore throat, and/or vomiting. One must be warned that taking Risperidone in conjunction with other drugs or alcohol may cause individuals to become drowsy or experience other potentially serious effects (Sifton et al., 2002).

Thioridazine, also referred to as Mellaril, is an additional medication that is commonly used to combat schizophrenia. There are a variety of other drugs that must be
avoided when taking Thioridazine, including drugs such as Prozac, because of the danger of potentially fatal cardiac irregularities. Side effects closely associated with this particular drug include diarrhea, drowsiness, fever, headache, irregular blood pressure, nasal congestion, nausea, psychotic reactions, restlessness, and/or vomiting. It is very important that individuals refrain from combining Thioridazine with large amounts of central nervous system depressants such as alcohol or narcotics as this combination may cause one to be drowsy or experience other potentially serious effects (Sifton et al., 2002).

Ritalin, also known as methylphenidate hydrochloride, Concerta, Metadate, and/or Methylin, is a central nervous system stimulant that helps to treat ADHD in children. The most common side effects associated with this drug include an inability to fall asleep or stay asleep and nervousness (Sifton et al., 2002). Lastly, Hydroxyzine or Atarax is an antihistamine that is commonly used to reduce the symptoms of common anxiety and tension. The side effect that is most commonly associated with this drug is drowsiness. One must be cautious to avoid consuming alcohol while taking Atarax because the drug may increase the natural effects of the alcohol (Sifton et al., 2002).

The school-wide behavioral management program and the medications that Ivan has been reported to be taking are the only current true behavioral interventions that the researcher was able to identify. Although Ivan has received counseling in the past, the researcher wasn’t able to locate any information on current therapy that Ivan may be receiving outside of the immediate school environment. Moreover, due to the fact that Ivan has been off of his probation for some time, there was no documentation to be found on court-mandated counseling or other such requirements. The school personnel believe
that Ivan has made some great improvements in his behaviors over the past few years, however, additional social skills training and continuation of the school-wide behavioral management program would certainly be recommended by all for the upcoming school year.
CHAPTER 4

POSSIBILITIES AND CONCLUSIONS

There are a variety of possibilities as to why Ivan has experienced so many academic and behavioral difficulties over the years. After conducting a review of Ivan’s records, interviews with various individuals who have interacted with Ivan over the years, and direct observations of Ivan himself, the researcher has been able to build some possible theories about the factors that may have led to his struggles.

Possibilities

Possibility 1

Due to Ivan’s frequent reports of being sick, the researcher believes that Ivan has struggled both behaviorally and academically in the school environment because the medications that he has taken over the years may have caused him to miss school. Secondly, the medications might have also caused him to feel tired and often act lethargic when he actually did attend school. Although it is quite possible that Ivan may have chosen to miss school because of his own reluctance to attend, it is also possible that the side effects of his medications caused him to feel sick and/or sleepy. As mentioned before, Ivan currently takes medications for his troubles with sleeping at night and for his anger control issues. As also mentioned before, some of the medications that Ivan has taken over time may have led to such side effects as agitation, abdominal pain, headaches, sore throats, sleep disturbances, anxiety, diarrhea, dizziness, fatigue, sleepiness, vomiting, coughing, and/or drowsiness. All of the aforementioned symptoms may have caused Ivan
to miss school or to act lethargic while at school; both of which would lead to one falling further behind in school.

Ivan is also reported to have experimented with drugs and alcohol at an early age and told the researcher that doctors, family members, and friends were unaware of most of these use/abuse issues. Therefore, Ivan was administered a variety of medications that may have had different effects upon him than expected because of the possible interactions with the alcohol and/or drugs. Moreover, although it would be assumed that medical doctors would be cognizant of the effects of combining certain medications at one time, the researcher believes that he has pointed to some possibilities of combinations of medications that were either unsafe, caused drowsiness, or whose effects may have been increased, decreased, or otherwise altered while being taken along with other particular medications that Ivan was prescribed all at the same time.

Additional support for this possibility may have come through the interviews that the researcher held for the study. On the first hand, Mrs. Newton was one of the teachers who questioned Ivan’s effort in her classroom and said that he was often sleepy when he came to her class. Therefore Ivan’s sleepiness seemed to be a large factor in his lack of effort in her opinion. However, on a second note, Ms. Offerman explained to the researcher that Ivan’s medications may be causing him to be groggy at school and that she has tried to compensate for any other variables by sending him to bed early each night. Hence, although the medications are intended to help Ivan to deal with some of his problem behaviors, it seems that Ivan’s medications may be one additional variable in his less than optimal record of school performance.
Possibility 2

The second possibility with regard to Ivan's struggles in school is connected to the issue of prenatal tobacco exposure as Ms. Offerman reported to one of the special education nurses that she had smoked two to three packs of cigarettes per day near the time of Ivan's birth. Orlebeke, Knol, and Verhulst (1999) found that maternal cigarette smoking during pregnancy led to increased frequencies of behavior problems in children. More specifically, these researchers found that children exhibited increases in aggressive externalizing behaviors when their mother's smoked during pregnancy and concluded that structures in the child's central nervous system may be negatively influenced by the nicotine intake. Moreover, Brook, Brook, and Whiteman (2000) concluded that mothers who smoked cigarettes during their pregnancy put their children at a greater level of risk for having both behavioral and psychological problems in the future. Lastly, Wakschlag et al. (1997) stated that maternal smoking during pregnancy was found to be linked to an increased risk of offspring development of a conduct disorder. More explicitly, after controlling for such additional variables as socioeconomic status, parental antisocial personality, maternal age, maladaptive parenting, and substance abuse during pregnancy, these researchers found the association between maternal smoking and child development of conduct disorders to be statistically significant.

Possibility 3

The third possibility in regard to Ivan's poor school performance is related to his own drug and alcohol use/abuse that has been reported. Ivan reported to be both using and selling drugs while also experimenting with alcohol for a large portion of his academic
career. He also spoke about the fact that the use/abuse may have had an influence upon him directly disobeying his own mother's requests and demands in the past. The researcher believes that it wouldn't be too much of a stretch to assume that this direct defiance was generalized to his behaviors at school as well. Moreover, the utilization of some of these drugs and the alcohol are likely to have caused Ivan to perform at less than optimal levels in his education throughout the years. As Ivan reported constantly losing and gaining friends as a result of him using or not using drugs and alcohol, it is likely that some of his issues with depression may have been both directly and indirectly tied to his use of substances.

Ivan specifically reported that he had experimented with marijuana, heroin, LSD/acid, cocaine, methamphetamines, and other similar drugs along with the alcohol in the past. Fortunately, he also reported that he has been clean from these substances for a total of 11 months, as he has been attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings for almost 1 year now in order to confront his problems with addictions. The researcher found it interesting that Ivan was reported to be getting better grades in school and staying out of trouble within the last academic school year or so. Therefore, it may easily be assumed that these improvements have come about as a partial result of Ivan deciding to get himself removed from drugs and alcohol and remain sober.

Pagliaro and Pagliaro (1996) have written about some of the effects that substance use/abuse can have upon the learning, memory, and school performance of both children and adolescents. They have explained that "for virtually all of the substances of abuse, increased use is associated with lowered attendance at classes, poorer academic
performance (compared to preuse levels), lowered educational aspirations, and an increased drop-out rate” (p. 172). These authors have also explained that drugs and alcohol can have a negative influence upon one’s attention, cognitive processing, motivation, perception, and memory (Pagliaro & Pagliaro, 1996). Therefore, these authors have pointed to some of the possible influences that have directly worked against Ivan throughout much of his educational career.

Possibility 4

The fourth possibility is linked to his multiple school placements over the years. Since preschool, Ivan has attended school in at least eight different buildings and has moved back and forth between some of these schools a variety of times. In fact, Ivan has physically moved from one school placement to another in excess of 10 times to this point. With the current confusion as to how one can effectively help to remediate Ivan’s reading and writing deficits, it is likely that many of his past teachers have felt the same way. Moreover, just as these teachers may have been starting to get a good plan of attack into place, Ivan was moved to yet another school setting. Further, it is likely that Ivan has been exposed to a variety of different classroom management methods, rules, structures, etc. in each classroom setting.

The aforementioned lack of consistency in structure is something that has been mentioned as an area of difficulty for Ivan. More specifically, Mr. Creston told the researcher that he felt that Ivan was a prime example of a student who performs best in the stable, predictable, and structured environment that his current classroom provides. It would be assumed that there was lots of instability and unpredictability in Ivan’s many
transfers from one classroom environment to another. Lastly, the researcher has considered the fact that there may have been no true reading specialist employed at many of the school facilities that Ivan has attended. Just as the case is at his current school, many schools are not financially or structurally equipped with teachers who specialize in both academic and behavioral curricular areas.

Kariuki and Nash (1999) found a significant correlation between student achievement scores and multiple school transfers. Likewise, Mao, Whitsett, and Mellor (1998) found the academic performance of students who moved from school to school to be lower than the performance of students who were more stable and that a high frequency of student mobility had an additionally adverse effect. Although these studies have only pointed to the negative influence of student mobility upon academics, it is easy to assume that student behaviors can be altered as well when students are frequently moved from one setting to another without achieving academic success. Therefore, the researcher believes that it is very plausible that some of Ivan’s struggles in school relate directly to his multiple school placements over the years.

Possibility 5

As a fifth possibility, the researcher believes that one must look at the instability and lack of consistency in his multiple home environments. Despite the family counseling, parent training, and financial supports that Ivan’s immediate family has received, it is likely that there has not been enough positive change to remove the deep-seated influence of the multiple sub-factors that have existed for years. As previously mentioned, Ivan’s father left the family when Ms. Offerman was still pregnant with Ivan. Therefore, Ms. Offerman
was left to raise five boys on her own who have all been found to be in need of special educational services because of their behavioral and/or learning problems. Moreover, Ivan's family has been reported to have a multi-generational history of individuals with special needs as Ms. Offerman herself has explained to the researcher that she has been diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Further, while Ivan was in the fourth grade, Ms. Offerman reported to the school social worker that she was struggling with her own mental health issues at the time.

Due to the fact that Ms. Offerman became overwhelmed with this situation at home and was unable to sufficiently care for her children, Ivan and his brothers were sent to live in foster care when they were still quite young. The multiple foster placements that Ivan experienced when he was young were likely to provide him with varying levels of consistency and stability as it would be expected that each family would have different rules, parenting styles, and structure to provide to Ivan. When Ivan returned home to live with his biological mother and brothers, there was still a sense of instability and a variety of negative influences that Ivan continued to be exposed to. Due to a lack of sufficient supervision, Ivan claimed that he started to hang out with the wrong crowd in his neighborhood in the early elementary school years and attributes his initial experimentation with drugs and alcohol to becoming acquainted with this crowd.

Within the home environment itself, Ivan was exposed to a wide range of inappropriate and poor social skills on the part of his older brothers. Due to the reported high incidence of physical aggressiveness within the home, it can be assumed that aggression was modeled by his brothers as a way to gain control of a situation. Moreover,
it can be assumed that there was also concurrent poor modeling of anger control within
the home as well. Furthermore, it has been mentioned that there has been some less than
optimal modeling of a productive lifestyle within the home, as some of Ivan's brothers
haven't held jobs or attended school for sustained periods of time. Lastly, Ivan told the
researcher that he had problems with the law in the past that involved setting fire to a
structure along with the help of some of his brothers. Clearly, Ivan has not been exposed
to the most positive role modeling within his own home environment.

In addition to the documented information that the researcher was able to locate,
many of the school personnel members in Ivan's school setting also spoke about the
influence of Ivan's home environment as a significant factor in his poor school
performance. Mr. Creston explained to the researcher that he believed that Ivan's family
life has held him back from becoming successful and indicated that Ivan is a kid who
didn't get to experience many of the positive things that other children have in their lives.
Though Ms. Offerman reported that the home environment supported literacy experiences
as she provided her children with books and assistance with their studies, one must assume
that the early instability and turmoil in the home didn't lead to a primary focus upon
reading and writing activities.

Mrs. Newton, Mr. Miller, and Mr. Ivy all believe that Ivan's placement into Mr.
Creston's classroom has provided him with some stability that he was previously missing
in his life. Further, Mr. Ivy also commented that Ivan's largest problem right now is his
emotional state, which may be influenced, in large part, by his home environment. Lastly,
many of those individuals who were interviewed mentioned the same thing when the
researcher asked them what was the single most important factor in Ivan’s relationship with school personnel that has led to his many improvements; almost everyone spoke about the importance of trust. It appears that these individuals sensed that Ivan hasn’t had many people in his life who he felt that he could honestly trust and all of them seemed to attribute Ivan’s recent school improvements to the stability and consistency that is now in his life.

Possibility 6

The sixth possibility in regard to Ivan’s struggles in school relates to the fact that Ivan’s behavioral problems have masked or overridden his academic deficits for many years now. The impact of this behavioral variable has caused Ivan to fall further and further behind without an opportunity to catch back up academically. Therefore, one might say that Ivan’s academic deficits have never been sufficiently addressed. Ivan’s negative behaviors have been well documented as far back as his preschool years when he was formally diagnosed with a behavioral disorder. Yet there were also concurrent struggles noted for Ivan in relation to his speech and language performance at the same time. Although Ivan didn’t know his letters while in kindergarten, his teacher explained that she couldn’t get enough compliance from him in order to teach him these skills.

The evidence of his continual academic slide was documented in his low performance on the Woodcock-Johnson academic achievement assessment during the fourth grade and his eventual learning disability diagnosis at the end of the same academic year. However, reports of Ivan’s violent physical and/or explosive verbal outbursts were of most concern to the school staff members as Ivan’s own safety and the safety of others
around him took precedence for many years. In fact, there were additional reports of verbal threats towards others as recently as this current academic school year. Therefore, although his negative behaviors have improved from time to time, unfortunately they have never been eliminated to the point that teachers could focus solely upon remediating his academic difficulties in the classroom. Even when the focus of Ivan’s education was shifting towards that of academics, there have been less than optimal resources as he has been served in many school facilities that have specialized in working with children on behavioral issues rather than academic concerns.

Across the years, Ivan has been diagnosed with depressive disorder with psychotic features, bipolar disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, and attention deficit disorder; all of which have contributed to his poor behavioral controls. Ivan himself explained to the researcher that his many fights and ways of getting into trouble when he was younger are the likely causes of him being labeled with a behavioral disorder. Additionally, Ivan realizes that he could be doing better in school if he would just put forth a little more effort and keep himself out of trouble. These poor behaviors have also been generalized outside of the school environment as well, as Ivan’s mother explained that his temper and exhibition of physical aggression during times of anger make her worry about Ivan’s ability to function independently on his own without getting himself into additional trouble. Some may say that we can only continue to work on these behaviors in the separate school facility and hope that Ivan’s recent improvements in behavior are a sign of things to come. If we accept this to be the case, in the meantime, we must continue to
deliver as much academic remediation as possible in the time that we have left to work with Ivan in the schools.

Possibility 7

The seventh, and most likely, possibility for Ivan’s struggles is that all of these factors together have contributed in some degree or another to Ivan’s behavioral and academic difficulties within the educational environment. With such a wide variety of variables and stressful conditions that have been working against his positive progress for so many years, many have agreed that the mere fact that Ivan has remained in school is quite a large feat. Any behavioral and academic interventions that are established for Ivan in his senior year of schooling may need to be designed and implemented while taking these possibilities and their resulting effects into consideration.

The case study/case history design that was utilized for this study may have been one of the most appropriate designs for this type of research because each individual student has his or her own unique traits and background experiences that contribute to their school and life outcomes. The intensified study of a single subject may help to point to specific trends in that person’s life that can be studied and analyzed before being compared to other individuals who have similar personalities and experiences across the spans of their own lifetimes. However, it must be noted that studies of single subjects do impose limitations upon how much the results and findings can be generalized to others and do not allow researchers to make cause and effect conclusions (McCormick, 1995).
Findings That Have Benefited the Child Studied

The researcher initially stated in his research proposal that there would be no direct benefits for any participants by taking part in this research study, but that this information may be helpful in designing future successful academic and behavioral interventions for students who have experienced similar happenings in their lives. Although this statement may have held true for most of the research participants, the researcher believes that many of the participants, including Ivan, did receive some indirect benefits and stand to benefit further as a result of this particular study.

As a result of the interviews that were held between the researcher and Ivan, the researcher believes that Ivan was able to open his eyes towards some of the many things that he has experienced across the span of his lifetime. Although the researcher's role was not that of a counselor, the case history investigation gave Ivan the opportunity to share his life story with someone else who was accepting of him and telling the story enabled Ivan to hear it again for himself. Ivan also learned of the many individuals in his life that have a vested interest in his success and he may have further realized the magnitude of concern that others have for him and his future. It was just one year ago that Ivan was completely resistant to having someone else assist him with his reading difficulties. The additional focus that was put upon him and his level of need from Mrs. Newton may have forced the school to take a stronger look at what they can do for Ivan in what may be his last year at the school.

The researcher believes that this study may have also encouraged further communication and collaboration between certain parties who may help to make Ivan's
experiences at home and school a more productive venture. The local high school and the separate facility may now be more aware of the need for additional communication and this may lead to additional successful experiences for Ivan and others up at the local high school setting. Ivan’s mother may have been an additional individual who has benefited from the conducting of this study. Ms. Offerman was under the impression that one of the school personnel members who she spoke with earlier in the year was unaware of Ivan’s reading deficits. When members of the school staff heard about this comment, they were very surprised to hear this and an increase in direct communication with Ms. Offerman is likely to occur. In fact, although there are currently no formal parent-teacher conferences held at the separate school facility, the school principal emphasized near the end of the current school year that he would like to look into this possibility so that the home-school relationship could be strengthened.

**Concerns and Suggestions for Next Year**

In the upcoming academic school year, which may be his last year of formalized schooling, Ivan must continue to work on both his academic and behavioral issues. Many of those individuals who were interviewed spoke about the specific things that must be addressed for Ivan and stated that planning for the upcoming year would continue on throughout the upcoming summer months.

One of the specific areas of concern lies with Ivan’s current reading deficits. Ivan himself stated that he realizes that he will be limited in terms of job and life opportunities if he is still unable to read after the completion of his schooling. As previously mentioned, Mrs. Newton plans to continue on with the Language! literacy intervention curriculum and
hopes to add at least one extra period of direct reading instruction for Ivan in the
upcoming school year. There was also mention of the importance of and plans for
additional training in the area of survival reading for Ivan. The researcher located an
upcoming text to be released in August of 2003 that dealt specifically with strategies for
teaching survival reading skills to secondary level students. The researcher shared this
information with Mrs. Newton and Mr. Creston and they both indicated a high level of
interest in purchasing such a text. However, one must hope that Ivan accepts the
additional emphasis upon reading instruction in the upcoming school year because
significant improvement would require a high level of commitment on the part of Ivan as
well.

However, not only would it be necessary for Ivan to be fully committed to learning
how to read, but others may also have to put forth their own efforts to provide Ivan with
the time and necessary materials to properly assist him. Mr. Creston and Mrs. Newton
may need to meet more frequently and consult with others to keep themselves on track
towards providing Ivan with the best possible instruction that they can in the time that
they have left with Ivan. Ivan’s teachers must also be willing to be flexible in their
planning and be willing to try new things with Ivan when it may be necessary. For
instance, although the researcher found a small level of resistance to the idea of
systematically charting data, both teachers may find it necessary to do some additional
progress monitoring as “decisions made without systematic data collection may result in
targeting inappropriate interventions that further exacerbate students’ struggles with
reading” (Joseph, 2002, p. 805). Ivan’s mother may also be of assistance to him with his
reading instruction by helping to encourage him to practice his skills after school as well as in the classroom. Even if she is unable to directly assist him with the work itself, Ms. Offerman may be able to establish a line of communication with the teachers so that specific reading activities can be sent home and/or opportunities for additional assistance within the community can be located.

An additional area of concern for Ivan in his upcoming academic school year relates to the comments that were made about his behavioral and social skill deficits. Youth who lack adequate social skills tend to have higher rates of delinquency, are more socially unpopular, have higher rates of school maladjustment, drop out of school more often, typically have a lower self-esteem, and may have delays in their overall cognitive development (Gresham, 1981). Therefore, it is easy to see how Ivan's deficits in this area have led to problems in and out of school and this is an area that must be dealt with before he moves on into his adult life. In a related area of need, Ivan's transition planning may need to become more aggressive and detailed. Though Ivan currently receives transition training through his social skills/life skills class, careers class, EBCE experiences, and integration into the local high school, it may be necessary to look at additional avenues of training and to make referrals to outside organizations such as Vocational Rehabilitation and/or the Job Corps.

It may also be helpful to inquire as to whether or not outside counseling services are still available to Ivan, and if so, are these services being utilized. The researcher was unable to locate any information in his data collection that indicated that Ivan was still involved in any type of counseling or therapy. If previous ventures in this area were
unsuccessful, it may simply be necessary to locate a different therapist that may be a better match for Ivan and his needs. If financial resources have been exhausted, it may be possible to identify and secure additional funding if Ms. Offerman and members of the school personnel work together to research this matter. Whatever the issue may currently be, Ivan appears to be an individual who could benefit from additional support outside of the school setting and from someone outside of his immediate family.

Lastly, although this issue has already been interwoven throughout many sections of the manuscript to this point, the researcher believes that a strengthened home-school connection is one of the primary keys to Ivan’s success in his last year at the separate school facility. Not only would this increase in communication clear up some of the misconceptions that Ms. Offerman and the school currently hold about one another, but it would also likely do much more for all parties involved. The researcher found in his data collection that the school tended to blame the home environment for many of Ivan’s behavioral difficulties while the home tended to blame the school for many of Ivan’s academic difficulties. This finger pointing blame game doesn’t appear to be helping Ivan and it could be eliminated to a large degree if the school and Ms. Offerman both felt that they were working together as a team in order to help make joint decisions about Ivan’s overall needs.

What the Researcher Learned

The researcher found that it was difficult to get as early a start on the research study as initially desired. The researcher would have benefited from earlier contact with the Human Participants Protection Committee, which may have resulted in being better
prepared to collect data earlier in the semester. Moreover, an earlier start on the research study would have given the researcher a better opportunity to look at similar studies that have been conducted so that the researcher could have known more about what to expect. For instance, the researcher initially believed that it would be necessary to consult with teachers and administrators at Ivan's schools from time to time over the period of 3 months. The researcher assumed that it would be both possible and necessary to conduct strict progress monitoring of Ivan's academic and behavioral progress. However, not only did the researcher get a later start than expected, but he was also able to collect most of the desired progress monitoring data from existing records that the schools had already maintained as part of their program.

The researcher also learned much more specifics in relation to confidentiality and how that confidentiality can be broken if one is not too careful. The entire Human Participants Protection Committee application process was a learning process in and of itself. The researcher became aware of many additional ethical issues that were not introduced to him before this time and the multiple revisions to the application helped to reinforce some of the subtle details for the researcher that might have been otherwise left out or ignored. Moreover, the researcher found himself assisting some of his participants with the ethical guidelines that the study was to be conducted under, as participants' names or other identifying information had to be kept strictly confidential.

Though the researcher was hopeful that this research study would provide a better overall picture of Ivan and the multiple influences that have acted upon him over his entire lifetime, it is difficult to be sure that this goal has been fully attained. First of all, it is likely
that there may have been a lack of documentation on certain issues as specific detailed information was simply not present in Ivan’s student records. This practice may have had an influence upon the validity of the researcher’s review of student records.

Secondly, because of time limitations, the researcher was only able to meet with some of the interviewees for a brief period of time. Therefore the reliability of some of the interviews may be called into question. An additional threat to the reliability of the interviews is related to the recency of the information that the researcher was looking for. For instance, it was difficult for Ivan to recall specific details of some of the old information that the researcher was looking for in the interviews. Lastly, as already mentioned, both the reliability and the validity of the classroom observations may have been strongly influenced by the researcher’s need to make direct contact with Ivan prior to the commencement of the study. As a result of these issues, the researcher learned how this study may have been conducted differently if one was to better protect against the aforementioned threats to the measurement properties of the study.

Yet, most of all, the researcher learned about Ivan and about many of the experiences that Ivan has had over the span of his lifetime. The researcher became interested in this student when it was first explained that Ivan was a student who had severe behavioral and academic deficits for many years. The researcher was especially interested to find out more information about Ivan’s severe reading deficits that put him at a 1st-grade level in reading as an 11th-grader. The researcher worked hard to remain neutral in his opinion of the primary research participant and in his collection of all relevant data despite his innate biases, viewpoints, perspectives, values, and overall
worldview. The researcher was happy to have the opportunity to interact with Ivan, hopess the best for him in his life, and thinks that Ivan is a special person who definitely has something positive to contribute to this world in his future.

**Directions for Future Research**

It may be necessary to explore different formats of research study designs to investigate these same phenomena in similar settings in order to be able to further generalize findings and conclusions. As Merriam (2001) points out, "there is still much confusion as to what constitutes a case study, how it differs from other forms of qualitative research, and when it is most appropriate to use" (p. 19). Therefore, researchers may decide to utilize other, more established formats of inquiry in order to avoid any additional levels of subjectivity or confusion.

The researcher believes that there were still many holes in the research that was conducted at its conclusion. The researcher may have benefited from additional in-depth research investigations on the topic areas of bipolar disorder, the theoretical orientation of the separate school facility, other available research-based reading programs for adolescents and young adults, and further case studies that concentrated on individuals who have experienced many of the same life occurrences that Ivan has. Nonetheless, the researcher believes that this research study provides a good example, which may serve as a starting point, for other researchers who are interested in the investigation of students with severe reading disabilities and concurrent behavioral disorders.
Summary

The researcher set out to conduct a case study/case history research investigation in which a single student and his or her competencies would be analyzed across multiple contexts. The researcher chose to focus upon Ivan, an 11th grade young man who has struggled significantly in past years in terms of his behavioral and academic performance. The researcher utilized a review of student records, interviews with various individuals who were closely connected to the life of Ivan, direct classroom observations, and a review of permanent products that Ivan produced in order to build a more complete picture of Ivan’s life.

Ivan’s cumulative school records indicated that Ivan has struggled with behavioral and academic difficulties as far back as his preschool years. Ivan was both physically and verbally abusive towards his classmates and teachers and this caused him to be bounced around from one setting to another on a frequent basis. Not only was Ivan moved from one school setting to another numerous times, but he was also placed in a variety of home settings as he lived in foster care and at a youth shelter on more than one occasion. School records also displayed that Ivan has had difficulties with his academics and has continued to fall further behind with each passing year. The greatest academic areas of difficulty for Ivan have been in the areas of reading and writing, although he does have a history of deficits in all areas of academic competence.

The researcher found that many of the other research participants found Ivan to be a pleasant and rapidly maturing young man. Comments were made in reference to the improvements in his behaviors within the last few years and all individuals who the
researcher spoke with hope to see Ivan become successfully independent when he is finished with his schooling. However, there are also many people who continue to worry about Ivan’s ability to exhibit appropriate behaviors when the structure, routine, and support that is provided at school is no longer there for him. Furthermore, school personnel remain puzzled as to how they can best provide Ivan with sufficient reading instruction to eliminate his strong deficits in what could be his last year of formalized schooling. The researcher is hopeful that the additional attention given to the case of Ivan for this research study will help to spark further efforts to provide sufficient resources and services to an individual who is clearly in need.
REFERENCES


